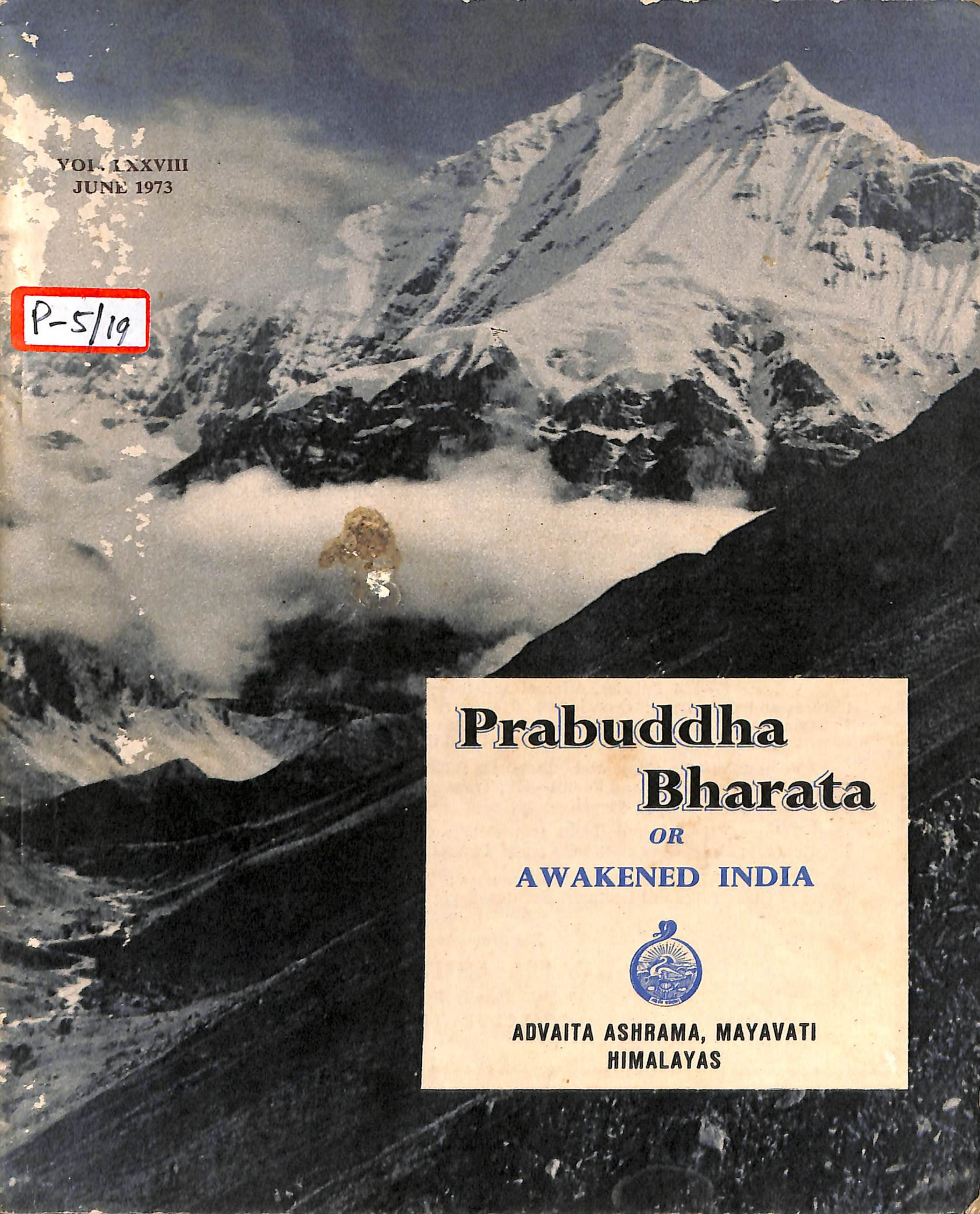


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SWAMI OMKARANANDAJI
Mahasamadhi on 8th May 1973
(Obituary appears on page 280)

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII JUNE 1973 No. 6

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Girish): 'Can one realize God by sadhana?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'People have realized God in various ways. Some through much austerity, worship, and devotion; they have attained perfection through their own efforts. Some are born perfect, as for example Narada and Sukadeva; they are called nityasiddha, eternally perfect. There are also those who have attained perfection all of a sudden; it is like a man's unexpectedly coming into a great fortune. Again, there are instances of people's realizing God in a dream and by divine grace.'

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna sang, intoxicated with divine fervour:

> Can everyone have the vision of Syama? Is Kali's treasure for everyone?
> Oh, what a pity my foolish mind will not see what is true!
> Even with all His penances, rarely does Siva Himself behold
> The mind-bewitching sight of Mother Syama's crimson feet.
> To him who meditates on Her the riches of heaven are poor indeed;
> If Syama casts Her glance on him, he swims in eternal Bliss,
> The prince of yogis, the king of the gods, meditate on Her feet in vain;
> Yet worthless Kamalakanta yearns for the Mother's blessed feet!

Question (posed by himself): 'There are people who perform japa for thirty years and still do not attain any result. Why?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'A gangrenous sore requires very drastic treatment. Ordinary medicine won't cure it.

'No matter how much sadhana you practise, you will not realize the goal as long as you have desire. But this is also true, that one can realize the goal in a moment through the grace of God, through His kindness. Take the case of a room that has been dark a thousand years. If somebody suddenly brings a lamp into it, the room is lighted in an instant.

'Suppose a poor man's son has fallen into the good graces of a rich per-

son. He marries his daughter. Immediately he gets an equipage, clothes, furniture, a house, and other things.'

Question (asked by Nanda): 'But how can we obtain God's grace? Has He really the power to bestow grace?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'I see. You think as the intellectuals do: one reaps the results of one's actions. Give up these ideas. The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with flowers in my hand: "Here, Mother, take Thy sin; here, take Thy virtue. I don't want either of these; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy good; here, take Thy bad. I don't want any of Thy good or bad; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma; here, take Thy adharma. I don't want any of Thy dharma or adharma; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy knowledge; here, take Thy ignorance. I don't want any of Thy knowledge or ignorance; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy purity; here, take Thy impurity. Give me only real bhakti."'

Nanda: 'Can God violate law?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'What do you mean? He is the Lord of all. He can do everything. He who has made the law can also change it.

'But you may very well talk that way. Perhaps you want to enjoy the world, and that is why you talk that way. There is a view that a man's inner spirit is not awakened unless he is through with enjoyment. But what is there to enjoy? The pleasures of "woman and gold"? This moment they exist and the next moment they disappear. It is all momentary. And what is there in "woman and gold"? It is like the hog plum—all stone and skin. If one eats it one suffers from colic. Or like a sweetmeat. Once you swallow it, it is gone.'

Nanda: 'Oh, yes. People no doubt talk that way. But is God partial? If things happen through God's grace, then I must say God is partial.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'But God Himself has become everything—the universe and its living beings. You will realize it when you have Perfect Knowledge. God Himself has become the twenty-four cosmic principles: the mind, intellect, body, and so forth. Is there anyone but Himself to whom He can show partiality?'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

If we are developed from animals, the animals also may be degraded men. How do you know it is not so? You have seen that the proof of evolution is simply this: you find a series of bodies from the lowest to the highest rising in a gradually ascending scale.... How can you have evolution without involution? Our struggle for the higher life shows that we have been degraded from a high state. It must be so, only it may vary as to details. I always cling to the idea set forth with one voice by Christ, Buddha, and the Vedanta, that we must all come to perfection in time, but only by giving up this imperfection. This world is nothing. It is at best only a hideous caricature, a shadow of the Reality. We must go to the Reality. Renunciation will take us to It. Renunciation is the very basis of our true life; every moment of goodness and real life that we enjoy is when we do not think of ourselves. This little separate self must die. Then we shall find that we are in the Real, and that Reality is God, and He is our own true nature, and He is always in us and with us. Let us live in Him and stand in Him. It is the only joyful state of existence. Life on the plane of the Spirit is the only life, and let us all try to attain to this realisation.



THE POWER OF PURITY IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

EDITORIAL

I

Let us recount here an interesting Chinese story, having great relevance to the today and tomorrow of men on earth. It is about 'the man who spurned the machine':

> Tsekung, a disciple of Confucius, seeing an old man making a ditch and pouring into it water which he brought by hand from a well with great labour and little result, suggested that he could do it more efficiently with help of a simple machine (a well sweep). But smiling the gardener replied that his teacher had taught that those who use cunning implements will be cunning in their dealings—requiring cunning in their hearts. Thus they cannot be pure and incorrupt; hence they are bound to be restless in spirit, and 'not fit vehicles for *Tao*'.
>
> After long thought, as they walked many miles further, Tsekung told his disciples, 'I have heard from... Confucius that the test of a scheme is its practicality...that we should achieve the greatest result with the least labour. Not so this manner of man....He lives ...not knowing whither he is bound, infinitely complete in himself. Success, utility...would certainly make man lose the human heart. But this man does nothing contrary to his heart; master of himself, above the praise and blame of the world, he is a perfect man.'[1]

We are, of course, sure that the man who spurns the machine will have scant hearing today. But it is also to be well noted that the man in our story was not in the least worried about being heard.

Once when Premier Khrushchev was on a visit to Indonesia, President Sukarno pre-

[1] See *The Wisdom of China and India* (Ed. by Lin Yutang, The Modern Library, New York, 1942) pp. 1054-55. Quoted in full in our *Editorial* of February 1972.

sented to him one of the finest items of Indonesian art. To the discomfiture of the host, Khrushchev said with his usual brash vehemence, 'I don't care for any of these things. What you require is machines and more machines.' What he said bluntly, others may speak more politely—but they all say the same thing: 'Machines and more machines.'

The cry is the same all over the world, developed countries or developing countries, eastern bloc or western bloc. In India too, where we usually speak loudly about religion, after-life, and reincarnation, our cry today is the same: 'Machines and more machines.' If there is any shrine today where Communists and non-Communists, the coloured and the white, the backward and the forward, Hindus and Christians, Arabs and Jews, all worship with equal devotion, it is that shrine where the machine is the deity and science the high priest.

This is the *Zeitgeist*, the time-spirit. But there is also such a thing as the spirit of the timeless.

One may very well fancy that in some of the stars live highly evolved beings who can not only read our external doings but also what is going on in our minds. Whatever may be our pride as evolution's choice, one can reasonably fear that to them we appear no better than 'tool-making fools', and this despite the fact that our machines have done some digging on the moon! What will it avail man if he penetrates into outer space but is not the master of his own mind and knows not how to live with his brother man?

The sanity of the old man in the story consists in his correct conviction that: 'Those who are restless in spirit are not fit vehicles for *Tao*.' This statement of an unknown unmodern Chinese gardener has great significance for modern times, for modern man. If with the advance of civilization the restlessness of spirit increases, and we thus become less and less the vehicles of *Tao*, then individually or collectively, whither are we bound?

The whole situation needs to be closely studied.

For good or bad, modern man cannot and will not reject the machine and its power, in order to be fit vehicle of *Tao*—about the very existence of which he is not at all sure. It thus makes no sense to ask him to reject machines. Machines have come to stay even if they end humanity's stay! Again, if modern man being restless in spirit is precluded from being the fit vehicle of *Tao* or the highest principle of existence, then his life is foredoomed to meaninglessness.

What then is the way for modern man? Four points we must keep in mind while seeking an answer to this question of basic urgency. *First*, that man cannot return—even if it were desirable—to those *laissez-faire*, non-technical days when soaring heavenward were only shining church-steeples, and not the monstrous chimneys puffing black smoke with its ensuing ecological world-problems. *Second*, that man cannot stop even here, hoping to avoid greater risks. *Third*, that although man cannot help moving, it is open to him to determine the direction of his movement. *Fourth*, that the solution of his problems has to be forged in the life-process in such a way as to avoid the experience of a motorist driving at high speed, when he too suddenly presses the brake.

II

The problem before us can very well be formulated in the manner used by our gardener who spurned the machine: (*a*) modern man has the most cunning implements of all time; (*b*) he tends to be cunning in his dealings, which only reveals that (*c*) he has cunning in his heart; (*d*) being thus, he has inevitably created burdens of

impurity and corruption; (*e*) this impurity within and corruption without has made man unprecedentedly restless; and (*f*) being restless in spirit he is the most unfit to know the truth, while his is the *most* compelling need to do so.

Again, in terms of the famous Hindu mythological story of churning the milk ocean by gods and demons, our process called 'civilization' has so churned the ocean of human life that from it have arisen both nectar and poison. And now the latter is threatening not only the nectar-components but even the survival of the race. So, in brief, the only realistic solution of our problem will be the creation of a poison-drinking super-power.

In the mythical story, the deadly poison was drunk by Śiva, in His supreme compassion, whereafter the churning continued, with great blessings resulting. Ever since, Śiva's throat has been blue from the effects of that poison. What we require today in this agonized world is the emergence of some blue-throated men and women.

The problem is: whence will that power-eating super-power arise? It will have to arise from within man himself. The source of that power is within man, within every human being. If humanity is to survive, man must learn how to release that power. And this is everyone's affair. Think not that the world-problem is only for big men. Today willy-nilly we live in one world. Don't you see how the wheat for your *capāti* (or unleavened bread) had to come from distant lands? Don't you see that if the Jews and Arabs quarrel, your economics and politics are affected? Yes, world-problems are your concern too. The release of the super-power is emphatically your and my concern.

In essence, this super-power is in Sanskrit called *ātma-śakti,* the power of the spirit. And the only way of releasing the *ātma-śakti* is through *citta-śuddhi*—purification of the mind, also called self-purification.

This world is not going to be a better place, no matter how many people 'join' to do something about it, if these people remain the same people. Out of collective impurities can never arise solutions to problems originating in individual impurities. The League of Nations failed utterly; the U. N. has been unsteady for years. Why? Because it simply reflects the situation we are all in. It can never be nobler than the world itself. It can only accelerate the speed of 'churning' the ocean of world-affairs, out of which still comes more poison than nectar.

Still, these efforts will continue, on the level of big men. Perhaps it is just as well that this is not our level; for it leaves most of us free to do something substantial, as individuals, towards self-purification. And in this basically lies the one hope for the world.

We shall not here discuss the methods of purifying the mind, or of *citta-śuddhi*; we shall only try to indicate the powers resulting therefrom, in its various stages.

III

In the nature of a human being—that curious amalgam of matter and spirit—there are two tendencies, one lower and another higher, one material and another spiritual. The purpose of self-purification is to release the higher tendency from the thraldom of the lower.

All the powers that man possesses by way of manipulation of matter or technological achievement are the products of the lower tendency. No amount of enhancement of its energy can ever enfranchise man: it can only mean increasing bondage. In the words of Vivekananda: '...the more we study the material world the more we tend to become materialized; the more we handle the material world, even the little spirituality which we possessed before,

vanishes.'[2] It is the power of the spirit that alone can liberate the spirit from the thraldom of matter.

Negatively speaking, the process of self-purification is getting rid of the material taint, manifesting as various desires, burning in human hearts from time out of mind. Desire is the inherent quality of our material tendency. So let us not consider ourselves especially wicked; all our failings have a hoary ancestry, though undoubtedly we are now in an accelerating mess of our own making. Even in his day, the Buddha had to say:

> 'Everything, O Jatilas, is burning. The eye is burning, thoughts are burning, all the senses are burning. They are burning with the fire of lust. There is anger, there is ignorance, there is hatred, as long as the fire finds inflammable things upon which it can feed, so long will it burn, and there will be birth and death, decay, grief, lamentation, suffering, despair, and sorrow. Considering this, a disciple of truth....will divest himself of passions and become free.'[3]

The situation is not fundamentally different today, except that we have developed certain specially harmful poison-problems and have added hitherto unknown forms of burning, from that of nuclear explosion to the elemental burning of the flesh.

Positively speaking, self-purification means getting established in certain virtues, which are the vehicle of the *ātma-śakti* or the power of the spirit—the power-eating super-power which we so urgently need. Hence we shall take up the findings of Patañjali, in his *Yoga-sūtras*, as to what kinds of power result from establishment in which virtue.

> 'When a man becomes established in non-violence, then all enmities cease in his presence.'[4]

If one gets established in non-injury, before him even animals by nature ferocious, will become peaceful. The tiger and lamb will play together in amity in his presence. The word 'non-violent' is commonly used as almost synonymous with 'ineffectual'. Yet perfect non-violence is by no means ineffectual, but a positive force of tremendous power. The greatest example of this fact is Gautama the Buddha. He laid special emphasis on our ancient teaching that:

> 'Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love; this is the old rule.'

And his mere presence at a crucial moment prevented a war:

> Between two adjacent city-states flowed the river Rohini. During a great drought the husbandmen of both sides claimed sole right to the little water remaining. When arguments failed, armies were marshalled and war seemed inevitable. But at that crucial moment the Buddha unexpectedly appeared. At sight of him, the Sakyas, from which clan the Buddha came, threw down their arms out of regard for him, the jewel of their race. And the example was followed also by their opponents, the Kolis.
>
> The Buddha asked the cause of the assembly. Being told it was for war, he asked, 'What for?' The princes said they were not quite sure; so they asked their generals, who in turn passed the question down till at last the original husbandmen told their story. Then Buddha asked: 'What is the value of water?' On being told 'Very little', he asked 'and the value of man?' 'Very great...'
>
> 'Why then,' he asked, 'do you propose to throw away that which is of great

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2 *Essentials of Hinduism* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1947) p. 25.

3 Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha* (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago, 1921) p. 52.

4 अहिंसा-प्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः ।
Patañjali: *Yoga-sūtras*, II. 35.

value for the sake of that which is of little value?' [5]

And the conflict was averted. But the real miracle was not in the irrefutable logic, but in the very presence of the Buddha, established in non-violence in such a way that in this as in countless other situations, enmity withered away. Indeed, if mere words could bring cessation of enmity, have we not talked long enough at the United Nations?

Patañjali says again:

'By being established in truthfulness one gets the power of attaining for oneself and others the fruits of work without the works.' [6]

Commonly, a person is said to be truthful when his words correspond to the facts of which he speaks; that is, he follows truth. But when he becomes perfectly established in truthfulness, he becomes, so to say, the master of truth: he cannot tell a lie even in a dream. He no longer obeys facts, but facts obey him. Everything he says becomes true.

As shown in the New Testament, when Jesus, perfectly established in truthfulness, bids a dead person arise, the dead person rises; [7] if he wakes from sleep and rebukes the wind, a calm settles on the sea.[8] Even our so-called laws of nature may cease to operate. It seems hard to believe, but this has happened and still does happen.

The story of Sītā is known to many in its flaming vindication of the power of chastity. Kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, Sītā had pined for long months in Lanka, spurning his riches as well as his advances in strict obedience to her vow of chastity in thought and deed. When Rāma at last conquered Lanka and killed Rāvaṇa, he remained disinterested in the reunion. Her dismay was unspeakable to hear him publicly describe the supposed suspicions of many—that since she had so long stayed in the palace of another man, she could hardly be taken back by him. But after the first rush of tears, her reply was such that after these thousands of years it stirs and supports the noblest aspirations of the human race. In brief, she showed how her devotion to Rāma and to Truth had preserved her purity despite unbelievable temptations; and ended saying that she now required only the funeral pyre, for, 'branded with undeserved stigma by her own husband, she could not live'.

We all know how from that funeral pyre she emerged unharmed, carried by the God of Fire himself. Never was the power of purity more sharply illustrated. But let us not forget that it was not Sītā's alone, but equally Rāma's purity that was vindicated. She had offered her life; but he had offered her who was far dearer to him than life, with nothing but a future of gloom for his remaining years—all from his burning desire to see that *dharma* should prevail. And the highest manifestation of *dharma* is purity.

Again Patañjali says:

'By being established in continence one gains spiritual energy.' [9]

Libidinous thoughts and activities consume a great portion of one's vital energy. When that energy is conserved through abstinence, observance of purity, mental and physical, it becomes sublimated and crystallized as spiritual energy. Most of us work only with the vital force and have little or no idea what spiritual force is.

Swami Vivekananda says:

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5 Sister Nivedita and Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (George G. Harper & Co., 3 Portsmouth St., Kingsway, W.C., 1913), pp. 278-9.

6 सत्य-प्रतिष्ठायां क्रियाफलाश्रयत्वम् ।
Patañjali: op. cit., II. 36.

7 St. Mark, V. 42; St. John, XI. 44.

8 St. Mark, IV. 39.

9 ब्रह्मचर्य-प्रतिष्ठायां वीर्यलाभः ।
Patañjali: op. cit, II. 38.

'The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power. Without chastity there can be no spiritual strength. Continence gives wonderful control over mankind. The spiritual leaders of men have been very continent, and this is what gave them power.'[10]

True religion is not *taught* but is *caught*. For instance, we talk much about 'juvenile delinquency', and solemnly pass many laws and doom many young lives to 'prevent' it. But we forget that it is the parents that are reborn, as it were, in the children: that delinquency is really a biological problem. Then if the children grow in homes where no self-restraint or purity is practised or even believed in, who could hope that any good thing could result? But if the parents live pure and restrained lives, they have every hope of seeing their children develop similarly. Here the power of purity comes very close to home.

IV

Yet the greatest of these powers was stated for all time by Christ:

'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'

As Vivekananda said, in comment on these words:

'In that one sentence lies the gist of all religions... It alone could save the world were all other scriptures lost. A vision of God, a glimpse of the beyond, never comes until the soul is pure.'

'All these forms and ceremonies, these prayers and pilgrimages, these books, bells, candles, and priests, are preparations; they take off the impurities of the soul; and when the soul becomes pure it naturally wants to get to the mine of purity, God Himself.'[11]

But lest we feel that this power leads only to inner experience, without outer triumphs to appeal to our outgoing minds, let us glance at a few of the latter. Those who have burnt themselves absolutely pure in the flames of love of God, become conduits through which God's own power flows into the world, creating new history, unparalleled even in secular spheres. As pointed out by Evelyn Underhill, when union is attained with God, 'a man's small derivative life is invaded and enhanced by absolute life'.[12] Infinite are the ways in which that life flows into the world.

St. Paul had neither wealth, influence, nor health. He had to work late at night to earn his bread. Yet how could he in face of the most appalling odds, lay the foundation of the world-wide church of Christ? He himself answers: 'Not I, but Christ in me'—which means the power of confirmed purity.

St. Ignatius Loyola began life in very ordinary circumstances. How did he get that power by which he changed the spiritual history of Europe? It came to him in the wake of self-purification, through long contemplation and hard self-discipline in the cave of Manresa.

St. Teresa, a delicate, chronic invalid of fifty years' age, suddenly left her convent and started a new life. Coursing through Spain, how could she bring about reformation in a great Order, in the teeth of powerful ecclesiastical opposition?[13] How could St. Catherine of Siena, after three years of life in a retreat, emerge to dominate the politics of Italy?[14] Our only answer is that when the Lord found them confirmed in self-purification, He used them for His own purposes. When they emptied themselves of ego, source of all impurities, God's power coursed through them. And as Vivekananda so often told us, that power is your power too.

Can you, again, imagine the power of

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10 *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati) Vol. I (1962) p. 263.

11 ibid.

12 Evelyn Underhill: *Mysticism* (University Paperbacks, Methuen, London, 1960), p. 429.

13 ibid., p. 430

14 ibid., p. 430

Vivekananda ? In a life of thirty-nine years, what he, a world-renouncer, did for that world, staggers the imagination of the boldest. He set in motion such forces as are still growing all over the world, bringing help to human beings on all levels. What was the secret of that power ? You may say that it was transmitted to him by Sri Ramakrishna ? Right ; but then you must say how he could contain the impact of that stupendous power. It can be found only in his exceptional purity : he was a 'roaring fire of purity'. Everything else could be added unto him only because he had that.

The power of purity is verily the power of God. What separates us from Him is nothing but adventitious impurity. When that is removed, what problem is there which cannot be solved with His power ? And this was why Swami Trigunatitananda, a brother-disciple of Vivekananda, said to some of his students in San Francisco: I do not mind breaking your bones, if only I can make you pure.

V

This creation is a highly complicated affair. The very structure of its smallest brick, an atom, does not reveal a God who is shy of mechanics. Even in describing His relation to man, Śrī Kṛṣṇa finds a mechanical analogy handy. He says :

> 'The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them, by His Maya, to revolve, as if, mounted on a machine.' [15]

So, though we would feel blessed if we could meet that gardener, to offer him our homage for his simplicity and purity of heart, we still must follow our different ideal. We cannot bring back to our kitchens damp firewood and make our mothers weep. Yet we are acutely aware of the poison-power arising from our 'progress'. Moreover we must seek to attain to perfection. We have to find a way of working all this out in consonance with the time-spirit. It is no use trying to solve problems on a plane where we simply do not live.

The Vedāntin is not daunted by the present and is unafraid of the future. Established in the Ātman-awareness born of purity, he can always look on phenomena as play of *guṇa* on *guṇa*. He has not to reject the machine. What matter if the iron is underground or out in the form of a wheel ? 'Have all the machines, electronics, nuclear powers that you really *want*', he says ; 'but if you want to be their master and not slave, know that there is only one way, that of the super-power called Purity.' And as Swami Vivekananda has said:

> 'Neither numbers nor powers nor wealth nor learning nor eloquence nor anything else will prevail, but *purity, living the life,* in one word, *anubhuti,* realization. Let there be a dozen such lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose whole soul is gone to Brahman, who care neither for wealth nor power nor fame, and these will be *enough* to shake the world.' [16]

15 *Bhagavad-gītā,* XVIII. 61.

16 op. cit., Vol. VIII (1959) p. 438.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora
10.12.15

Dear L——,

I am pleased to receive your letter of the 3rd instant.... It is very difficult to realize fully the God-idea in man (*jīva*); unless spiritual knowledge dawns, it is not completely feasible. But, then, one can serve man with this faith, with this understanding that whatever service is rendered to *jīva* is service to the Lord and that He exists in everyone, pervading all beings—that He is within every *jīva*. This kind of service is called *Nārāyaṇa-sevā*—service to Nārāyaṇa. With this understanding, if we can serve man in this way with all our heart, desiring nothing in return, we shall one day realize, through God's grace, that service to *jīva* is in reality service to the Lord. For He dwells in every being as the all-pervading Reality. In fact nothing but He exists.

Purity or impurity is nothing but difference in our feelings. Attachment to sense-objects is impurity, and attachment to God is purity. God alone is the essence in man; minus Him, man is nothing but a bundle of flesh and bones. The consciousness in man is a part of God and that is pure; everything else is impure. The good feelings in our heart take us towards God and evil thoughts and feelings keep us away from Him. All this can be understood in due course; first one should hear about it. The attraction one feels to a holy character comes about because of the grace of God. The Lord is the repository of all auspiciousness. If one attains Him alone, one gets rid of all restlessness and, attaining complete peace, becomes blessed.

If we can stay put at His door, everything will come about. He Himself will teach us everything. Try to nurture virtuous feelings in your heart. He is goodness itself; if you can keep Him in your heart, you will not feel the want of anything. He is our Mother, Father, Friend, and Playmate; He is learning, He is wealth, He is everything. In this manner, if you can make Him your own, life will become sweet indeed.

You have asked me many questions, but it is not possible to answer all of them. And even if I answer, I don't think you will be able to understand. But this much is certain: insofar as you proceed towards Him, that much will everything become clarified of itself, and all questions will be answered. There should be inner awakening; otherwise no idea is grasped. Always try to see the Lord within your heart. Whenever you are desirous of knowing anything, ask Him with all your heart. Being seated in your heart, He will make you understand everything. Indeed, He alone brings all understanding to everyone. If He does not let you know, a hundred attempts cannot bring you knowledge, nor can anyone give you knowledge. That which appears to be a great mystery will be, by His grace, easily pierced, and the Truth will stand revealed. In time,

everything will come; don't be restless. Call on the Lord with all your heart, and try to make Him alone your own. Pray to Him from the innermost core of your heart. He is the Indweller, who knows our innermost feelings and arranges things accordingly. There is no doubt whatsoever about this.

Accept my love and best wishes.

Your well-wisher,
SRI TURIYANANDA

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN BOSTON, MARCH 1896

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

II

Mrs. Bull's commodious house on Brattle Street was even more full of people than usual. In addition to the relatives, friends, housekeepers, secretaries, and protégés who in greater or lesser number seemed always to be a part of Mrs. Bull's household, there were Miss Thursby and Mrs. Sterling, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett, and, later in the month, Miss Sarah Farmer. Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the sister and brother-in-law of Josephine MacLeod, had taken an active part in Swamiji's work in New York, and being of ample means (Mr. Leggett was head of a large wholesale grocery firm), helped him to some extent financially. They were owners of Ridgely Manor, an estate near the Hudson River, where Swamiji had gone for the 1895 Christmas holidays and where, on his second visit to America in 1899, he was to spend many memorable weeks.

Miss Sarah Farmer, the gentle founder of the Greenacre Conferences, who dressed habitually in grey and wore a flowing headdress resembling an Anglican nun's, was a close friend of Mrs. Bull's and her guest for at least a part of Swamiji's Boston visit. Not being in the city to greet him when he arrived, she wrote to him on March 20 from New York on stationery embossed with the Greenacre seal (a twig-bearing dove flying over the word PEACE) to express her regret. Her letter, which later found its way into Mrs. Bull's papers, read as follows:

> My dear Brother—
>
> It seems a strange providence that I should be here in New York and not in Boston to welcome you and do something to help make pleasant your stay, but I trust I may be able to return before you leave and that I may have the privilege of seeing you for a short time at least before you return.
>
> I have thought of you a great many times and have given thanks to God for making you a blessing to so many souls. There were many inquiries about you at Greenacre last year and many wishes expressed that you might be there, but I think all your friends rejoiced that you had the privilege of carrying your message to England, but we hoped that this summer Greenacre might claim you. Is it not so to be? The report comes to me that you are to go abroad again this summer, is it true? God bless you wherever you may go and strengthen you for your work!

If you are not too busy while you are in Boston, will you kindly note down for me the particulars of the Parliament of Religion held in your country so many hundreds of years ago, telling me who originated it and what was the end sought. Please send it to 26 Holyoke St. that I may find it on my return.

With every good wish for you, I remain

Your sister, in the work,[10]

Sarah J. Farmer

(Miss Farmer's reference to the Parliament of Religions held in India was no doubt to the conclave Akbar the Great convened at his 'Ibādat-Khāna', or House of Worship, in the last half of the sixteenth century. This parliament, attended by Hindu philosophers, Jaina teachers, Parsi priests, and Christian missionaries—the learned imāms of Islam had previously had their say—had been referred to by Swamiji as 'only a parlour meeting' compared to the great Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, but it was a parlour meeting of which he was justly proud.)

Among out-of-town friends of Swamiji who had come to Boston in March was Miss Ellen Waldo, his New York disciple, secretary, housekeeper, and all-round worker for his cause. Miss Waldo did not stay with Mrs. Bull—the two were not altogether compatible—but with her (Miss Waldo's) cousin, a Dr. William H. Prescott, who lived in Boston at 285 Marlborough Street. 'He has for years done a large amount of free medical work among the poor and he is interested in the higher teachings that the Procopeia is striving to popularize',[11] Miss Waldo had written to Mrs. Bull from New York earlier in the month, accepting on her cousin's behalf tickets to the Procopeia Club meetings.

Then there was Mr. Goodwin, the young Englishman who a few months earlier, in December of 1895, had started transcribing Swamiji's New York class-talks and who had quickly become indispensable not only in the important role of stenographer, but as a general, though unofficial, manager of the work. Since the day he had walked into the Vedanta Society in New York in answer to a want ad, Mr. Goodwin had not been separated from Swamiji. Earlier in March he had gone with him to Detroit, and he was with him here in Boston.

Where Swamiji made his headquarters during this Boston period is not known. One can, however, be fairly sure that while he gave his mailing address as the Procopeia, he often stayed overnight at Mrs. Bull's hospitable house in Cambridge where so many of his good friends had gathered. Mrs. Bull, one imagines, would not have had it otherwise, and Swamiji himself must have welcomed a relaxed evening, talking in the fire- and candlelight with congenial friends, for after nearly three years of continuous work his nerves, as he wrote to Alasinga on March 23, were 'almost shattered'. But another part of the time he may well have slept for the sake of convenience at the Procopeia Club headquarters in Boston, where he no doubt sometimes held morning and afternoon interviews with those who wished to talk with him, who wished to receive instruction, to have their problems solved, their way of life clarified, and their paths cleared of obstruction, who wished, in short, his blessing. Swamiji would have taken the time and care to give to all who came. His purpose in America—indeed, his purpose in this world—was not to spare himself but to save others.

But though he worked, it was a festive time, and one remembers in this connection that he had many friends in Boston and Cambridge other than his fellow visitors. These included the famous Julia Ward Howe, the equally famous Thomas Went-

[10] S. J. Farmer to Swamiji, 20 Mar. 1896, VSNC.

[11] Sarah E. Waldo to Mrs. Ole Bull, 6 Mar. 1896. VSNC.

worth Higginson, Franklin Sanborn, and Professor William James. But his friend of longest standing was Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard's Greek Department, who in 1895 had been made dean of the University's Graduate School. Swamiji's friendship with Professor Wright and his family dated back to the days before the Parliament of Religions when almost no one could correctly spell 'Vivekananda' and very few tried. It had been Professor Wright who, like an instrument of Providence, had quickly recognized Swamiji's genius, had urged him to appear as a delegate to the Parliament, and had made it possible for him to do so, writing the necessary letters of introduction to the authorities. Since those early days, Swamiji and the professor had met frequently and, from time to time, had corresponded. (It should be mentioned here that while Professor Wright deeply admired Swamiji and his teachings, he did not become his follower, nor did he stay with him at Thousand Island Park in the summer of 1895, as has been mistakenly supposed.)

The Wright family was one of which Swamiji was particularly fond, but unhappily for all concerned, Mrs. Wright and the three Wright children—Elizabeth, or Bessie, who was sixteen, Austin, going on thirteen, and the four-year-old John—were not in Cambridge in March of 1896. Because of the delicate health of John, or 'Jackie', Mrs. Wright had taken the children to Marion, Alabama, for the winter, thus escaping the rigours of the New England climate. Professor Wright had perforce remained in Cambridge, a temporary bachelor, rooming at one of Harvard's dormitories. But while New England had its snow, sleet, and subzero temperatures, the southern part of the United States had perils of its own, and the Wright family was not to escape tragedy. In March the two boys, Austin (in whom Swamiji was especially interested) and John, contracted typhoid fever, in those days a prevalent and dread disease. The correspondence at this time of crisis between Professor Wright and his wife has been made available to us by Mr. John K. Wright (the Jackie of 1896), for it was during this trying period that the professor saw Swamiji and wrote of him at some length to Mrs. Wright.

On the evening of Tuesday, March 24, Professor Wright called on Swamiji at Mrs. Bull's, but as other guests abounded, there was small opportunity for a long and good talk between the two men. By ten o'clock the professor was back in his dormitory room, writing to his wife and preparing to catch an eleven o'clock train for New Bedford, a Massachusetts city some fifty miles south of Boston.

> Tonight [he wrote in his hurried letter] I went to Mrs. Ole Bull's to call on Swami. He is coming to lunch with me on Friday. He looks *good,* and happy and is making a great success at lecturing. A young stenograph [Mr. J. J. Goodwin] has fallen in love with his teachings, been converted from Materialism to Vedantism, and takes him down for love, following him from city to city. Many of his lectures are in print. At Mrs. Bull's I met Mrs. Fenellosa, Miss Emma Thursby, Miss Seabury and Mrs. Vaughan (born Bull) [Olea Vaughan, Mrs. Bull's daughter], besides Mr. Leggett, a New York rich man (rather nice) who took Swami to Europe last summer, and greatly admires him.[12]

Professor Wright's next letter to his wife was written on the following day from New Bedford, where, it appears, he had gone to make a study of educational methods. Unhappily, this New Bedford field trip fell on the day of Swamiji's Harvard lecture, and thus we have no first-hand account from Professor Wright of that occasion. In New Bedford, however, he thought of his now famous friend and, with a touch of paternal

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12 Copies of this letter and those that follow from Prof. Wright to his wife are in the VSNC archives.

pride, to which he was well entitled, wrote to his wife of the heights Swamiji had attained in the world and of his recent successes in Boston:

> Swami gives a lecture tonight in Cambridge, before the Philosophical Club: all the big wigs in philosophy are going to see him.
>
> He is giving talks in Boston before the Procopeia society: they supposed about 150 people might come, but they have had to take a larger hall, 450 people crowding in. And there has been absolutely no advertising.

The following day Professor Wright returned to Cambridge, and on Friday, March 27, Swamiji had lunch with him, going first to his room in Harvard's Holworthy Dormitory for an hour-long talk and, after lunch at 'the Club' (which club is not known), returning to the room where for another hour and a half the conversation continued. Swamiji told of his life for the past year or so—of his visit to England, of the people he had met and the reception he had been accorded, of his triumphs and his adventures. This recounting he owed the professor, who, as he had once written to Alasinga, had been 'the first man who stood as my friend' in America.[13]

Professor Wright found Swamiji changed. The last time he and Mrs. Wright had together seen him had been in May of 1894; since then he had formulated his message in detail, had become certain of the nature of his mission in the West and had settled down to teach. The fiery warrior who in one city after another had forthrighly given the lie to missionary propaganda against his Motherland, who had defied all opposition, who had indeed stridden onward as though opposition, virulent as it was, did not exist, who manifested power above all else, this 'cyclonic monk' had become the relatively imperturbable teacher, more absorbed now in delivering his message than in waging battle against those who opposed him. As a consequence he appeared more gentle. Others had commented upon this same change in Swamiji's manner, which seems to have become noticeable around the beginning of 1895, or at the start of his teaching work in New York. Around that time Miss Thursby, for instance, in writing of his New York work to Mrs. Bull, remarked: 'Last night's lecture in Brooklyn was a splendid one. He seems to have come to the realization that he must work in the spirit of his Master. I wrote him . . . how much my friends had enjoyed his talk [at a private class] and how we all felt the uplift when he spoke to us only in the spirit of his Master. Landsberg said last night that he [Swamiji] would never talk again in the old antagonistic spirit.'[14] But 'the old antagonistic spirit' had been essential to the work Swamiji had had to do during most of 1894. His days of battle were over only because the battle had been won. As for the 'spirit of his Master', did not Miss Thursby realize that neither she nor Mrs. Bull would have known of that spirit or have understood it if Swamiji had not always exemplified it?

As for the experiences Swamiji had had since he had last seen Professor Wright, they were many and varied, and it is small wonder that there was so much to talk of. Telling his wife of that conversation of March 27, the professor wrote:

> Swami came and lunched with me today. He came to the room at about twelve: we sat and talked till one, when we went over to the Club; then at two we came back and talked till half past three.
>
> He is become so much gentler, and wiser, and sweeter. Indeed he is most charming. He says his stay in America has taught him a great deal. I wish I

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13 *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1963), Vol. V, p. 37.

14 Emma Thursby to Sara Bull, Feb. 1895, VSNC.

could give you an idea of his talk.—He says he has worked on and out with a new view of life: that the practical living of America has brought his old problems before him in new lights.

Last summer he was in England and had a very successful time. He made a speech in Queen's Hall, and the papers took him, writing editorials. The clergy of the Established church became interested in him, and came to his classes. Canon Wilberforce, now in charge of Westminster Abbey, took him into his house and gave him a dinner. Mr. Haweis [the Rev. H. R. Haweis, a very well-known Anglican clergyman who had spoken at the Parliament of Religions] had him lecture in his own parlours, and preached about him and his teachings in his church. "Wasn't it funny ?" Swami said. "When I came into Mr. Haweis' crowded parlour he came up to me and in a loud voice said 'Here comes the master!' "

The chief secretary for India, Sir F. Arbuthnot, Swami succeeded in winning, and they became fast friends. Swami said that England is just like India with its Castes. "I had to have separate classes for the two castes. For the high Caste people—Lady This and Lady That, Honorable This and Honorable That—I had classes in the morning; for the Low Caste people, who came pell-mell, I had classes in the evening."

My account of what Swami said may sound as if he was boasting, but it was not so. He was never so modest. He has made a very fast friend in a Scotch gentleman, a Mr. Sturdy, who must be a character. He made a fortune of £10,000 a year in Australia and then came to England, and became a Theosophist. His Theosophy carried him to India where he soon became cured of it. He then became a monk and fell in with some of Swami's *gurubhais* (or 'fellow pupils') and became much attached to them. Something then carried him back to England where he married, giving up the monk's life. But his love for his former brethren now finds its outlet in Swami. It was he who got up the various lectures and classes in London. Swami says that he intends to take to India a score of young English Vedantists and have them go as missionaries to the Hindoos, of their own (the Hindoo) religion. The Hindoos, he says will listen to them as to no other people. "Why! if these people think there is so much in our religion, there must be something in it," Swami naively said they would say.

Canon Wilberforce told Swami that they were trying to teach in substance the Vedanta philosophy in the church at the present time, and that he (Swami) was really a missionary to the Church of England.

Mr. Leggett, Swami's New York friend, is a very rich grocer. Swami becomes genuinely American in talking about him: "he is worth about $20,000,000." He took Swami to England last summer. In May Swami goes over again, and several other people are also going. It is a sort of nineteenth century Vedantade. Mrs. Ole Bull will probably be of the company.

In England Swami saw men chiefly, clergymen, members of the Indian civil service, not a few army officers. He says that about every one person in four was either born or has lived in India. And these people either hate it bitterly, or think there is no country like it. The latter class found in Swami something that reminded them of their beloved home, and came to him and helped him most enthusiastically.

Swami has evidently swept Professor James off his feet. Miss Sibbens told me this evening that he was going in to Boston to hear his talks at every opportunity. Dear old Swami! He said he used to believe in revivals, and used to take part in them . . . He used to harangue in the wildest manner, sing and dance, and have crowds following him in India but that is all wrong. Quietness and Knowledge is best. [It is more than probable that Professor Wright confused two stories here: one, a description, perhaps, of the early days at the Baranagore Monastery when Swamiji and the other monks would at times lose themselves in a fervour of spiritual emotion, spending hours totally absorbed in singing devotional

songs; and two, a description of Hindu *saṅkīrtanas*, such as that inspired and led by Śrī Caitanya in the sixteenth century, when crowds dancing and singing in devotional ecstasy could be said to be mad with the love of God. That Swamiji ever led such public *saṅkīrtanas* in India does not accord with what is known of his life there prior to his coming to America. Thus until some corroborative evidence is forthcoming it is safer to assume that Professor Wright, to whom this whole subject must have been new and strange, got it a little wrong.] He said some very beautiful things: he is going to send me his lectures, and I'll let you have them. He asked very affectionately about you and the children the very first thing he said to me.

Just before lunching with Swamiji, Professor Wright had received news that his two sons were very much better but that Bessie had entered upon the uncertain course of the disease. It was a time of extreme anxiety for him. 'The tension is not easy to bear,' he wrote to his wife; yet he could devote pages in this same letter to telling her about Swamiji, knowing she would be interested, and she, in turn, could remember him and write of him with affection. 'Your letter came about Swami,' she wrote on the night of March 30. '...Dear old Swami! I do love him.'

It was not until a day or two after Swamiji had left Boston that Professor Wright received word from Marion, Alabama, of his daughter's death, and not until some six weeks later that this tragic news reached Swamiji in England. Swamiji's letter of condolence, which has also been made available to us by Mr. John K. Wright, is the last he is known to have written to his friend:

16th May 1896
63 St. George's Road
London. S.W.

Dear Adhyapakji [Honorable Professor]—Last mail brought the very very sad news of the blow that has fallen on you.

This is the world my brother—this illusion of Maya—the Lord alone is true. The forms are evanescent but the spirit being in the Lord and of the Lord is immortal and omnipresent All that we ever had are round us this minute for the spirit can neither come nor go only changes its plane of manifestation.

You are strong and pure and so is Mrs. Wright and I am sure that the Divine in you has arisen and thrown away the lie and delusion that there can be death for anyone. "He who sees in this world of manifoldness that one support of everything, in the midst of a world of unconsciousness that one eternal consciousness, in this evanescent world that one eternal and unchangeable, unto him belongs eternal peace"

May the peace of the Lord descend upon you and yours in abundance is the prayer.

of your ever loving friend
Vivekananda

How many friends Swamiji had in Boston there is no telling. We can be sure, however, that they did not all belong to the circles of the famous or the near-famous, for Swamiji's friendships were never confined to any one group or class of people. Indeed the story of his visit to this country would not be complete without taking into account a sentence imbedded in one of the news articles quoted above. Speaking of his American life in general, the *Boston Daily Globe* observed: 'The Swami has talked not only before intellectual audiences and in fashionable drawing rooms, but he has sought out and made friends with the workingmen with whom he is able to get on so well, because he believes that all great truths are expressed in simple forms.' Swamiji's friendship with the workingmen of America (largely in those days immigrants and in most cases very poor) constitutes a part of his life of which we know almost nothing, for no memoirs or letters concerning it have come down to us. Yet even as he had made friends with the rich and the poor alike dur-

ing his wandering days in India, so in America he surely did the same, and to overlook this aspect of his visit in the West is to miss a large part of Swamiji himself, for his love and concern for the poor and the burdened was an intrinsic element of his nature. How often did he write: 'Love the poor, the miserable, the downtrodden!' It is true that he had in mind, and at heart, primarily the poor of India, but not exclusively. 'May I be born again and again,' he wrote to Mary Hale in 1897, 'and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'[15] It is said that even as a boy he used to visit the quarters of Calcutta where the untouchables lived in order to help them; and during his days of wandering alone through India he grieved, broken-hearted, over the misery he saw throughout his Motherland. Feeling for the poor as he did, it is not likely that he would have ignored them in this country, particularly in the depression years of 1893 to '97 when the suffering among the labouring classes was intense. One remembers the passage in Sister Christine's 'Reminiscences' in which she recalls several instances of his keen feeling for the poverty-stricken and the forlorn in America. 'His compassion', she writes, 'for the poor and downtrodden, the defeated, was a passion. One did not need be told, but seeing him one knew that he would willingly have offered his flesh for food and his blood for drink to the hungry.'[16]

While we know that Swamiji went through the tenement districts of Chicago and surely talked with the people who lived there, and while we know also from his own statement that he used to stand on the docks of New York watching the immigrants arrive, we have no clear-cut evidence that he came in contact with the workingmen or with the poor of Boston. But in view of the sentence from the *Globe* quoted above, and knowing his nature, it is hard to doubt that the Boston workman was as much the object of his concern as the workman in any other American city. Nor is it beyond the realm of possibility that it was a Boston labourer to whom he gave three hundred dollars—an act (whoever the recipient) that caused Mr. Goodwin to bristle with disapproval and alarm. 'I have heard', he wrote to Mrs. Bull in a letter dated April 11, 1896, 'that while in Boston he [Swamiji] gave away a large sum of money, quite haphazard—over $300 I believe, and I am determined to stop this indiscriminate giving [by keeping money out of Swamiji's hands]—I am doing this with Mr. Leggett's approval.'[17] Mr. Goodwin had the finances of the Vedanta movement at heart, and from a practical point of view his attitude was understandable. To appreciate it, one need only remember that three hundred dollars was then equivalent to a labourer's wage for a year, to the earnings of a seamstress working long hours for over three years, or, again, to three times the amount Swamiji received in New York for holding six classes in the Fifth Avenue home of a friend. But Swamiji, of course, did not so calculate, and neither Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Leggett, Mrs. Bull, nor all his advisers combined could have prevented him from distributing his money as freely as he distributed his blessings.

III

To return to Swamiji's public activities in Boston, he lectured seven times, and on

15 *The Complete Works,* Vol. V, p. 136, 9 July 1897.

16 *Reminiscences of S. V.*, p. 216.

17 J. J. Goodwin to Sara Bull, 11 April 1896, VSNC.

Monday, March 30, the day he left the city, the *Evening Transcript* devoted a long article to his work. Although portions of this *Transcript* article were quoted in the first edition of the *Life*, they were dropped from later editions; therefore the article is given here in full. It conveys, I believe, not only an idea of Swamiji's lectures of this period but also an idea of Boston's reception of them as reflected in its best of newspapers:

FOR UNIVERSAL RELIGION
The Hindu Swami Lectures Before Several Societies.

The Swami Vivekananda has, during the past few days, conducted a most successful work in connection with the Procopeia. During this time he has given four class lectures for the club itself, with constant audiences of between four and five hundred people, at the Allen Gymnasium, 44 St. Botolph Street, two at the house of Mrs. Ole Bull in Cambridge, and one before the professors and graduate students of the philosophical department of Harvard University.

The idea which brought the Swami to America three years ago as Hindu delegate to the Parliament of Religions, and has been the guiding motive of all his subsequent work, both in America and England, is one which appeals strongly to the people whose creation the parliament was, but the methods which he proposes are peculiarly his own. One of his lectures during the week has been "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," but "harmonious religion" would, perhaps, equally meet the case, if, indeed, it would not more adequately express that for which he is striving. The Swami is not a preacher of theory. If there is any one feature of the Vedanta philosophy, which he propounds, which appears especially refreshing, it is its intense capability of practical demonstration. We have become almost wedded to the idea that religion is a sublime theory which can be brought into practice and made tangible for us only in another life, but the Swami shows us the folly of this. In preaching the Divinity of Man he inculcates a spirit of strength into us which will have none of those barriers between this life and actual realization of the sublime that, to the ordinary man, appear as insurmountable.

In discussing the general lines on which it appears to him universal religion can alone be established, he claims for his plan no super-authority. As he says: "I have also my little plan. I do not know whether it will work or not, and I want to present it to you for discussion. In the first place, I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim: 'Do not destroy. Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Help, if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands, stand by, and see things go on. Therefore say not a word against any man's convictions, so far as they are sincere. Secondly, take man where he stands, and from thence give him a lift.

"Unity in variety is the plan of the universe. Just as we are all men, yet we are all separate. As humanity, I am one with you; as Mr. So-and-so, I am different from you. As a man you are separate from woman, but as human beings you are all one; as a living being you are one with animals and all that lives, but as man you are separate. That existence is God, the ultimate unity in this universe. In Him we are all one. We find, then, that if by the idea of a universal religion is meant that one set of doctrines should be believed by all mankind, it is impossible; it can never be, any more than all faces will be the same. Again, if we expect that there will be one universal mythology, that is also impossible, it cannot be. Neither can there be a universal ritual. When this time comes the world will be destroyed, because variety is the first principle of life. What makes us formed beings? Differentiation. Perfect balance will be destruction.

"What then do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean a universal philosophy, or a universal

mythology, or a universal ritual, but I mean that this world must go on, wheel within wheel. What can we do? We can make it run smoothly, we can lessen friction, we can grease the wheels, as it were. By what? By recognizing variation. Just as we have recognized unity, by our very nature, so we must also recognize variation. We must learn that truth may be expressed in a thousand ways, and each one yet be true. We must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints, and yet be the same thing.

"In society we see so many various natures of mankind. A practical generalization will be impossible, but for my purpose I have simply characterized them into four. First, the active man; then the emotional man; then the mystical man, and lastly the philosopher.

"To be universal, religion must provide possibility of realizing truth through means suitable to any one of these minds, and a religion which says that through one alone all men must struggle, whether these minds are capable of the struggle or not, must end in agnosticism."

In his lecture on Karma Yoga, the Swami dealt with the science of work. The lecture for the most part analyzed the motives men have in work, and particularly the motive of heaven as a reward for good work on earth. This, said the Swami, is shopkeeping religion. Work alone reaches its highest when it is done absolutely without hope of reward, work for work's sake, and without regard to the consequences.

In discussing Bhakti Yoga, Devotion, the Swami explained the rationale of a Personal God. This idea of devotion and worship of some being who has to be loved, and who can reflect back the love to man is universal. The lowest stage of the manifestation of this love and devotion is ritualism, when man wants things that are concrete, and abstract ideas are almost impossible. Throughout the history of the world we find man is trying to grasp the abstract through thought forms, or symbols, and the external manifestations of religion. Bells, music, ritual, books, images, came under that head. Man can only think with form and word. Immediately thought comes, form and name flash into the mind with them, so that when we think of God, whether as the Personal God with human shape, or as the Divine Principle, or in any other aspect, we are always thinking of our own highest ideal with some or other form, generally human, because the form of man is the highest of which man can conceive. But, while recognizing this as a necessity of human weakness, and while making proportionate use of rituals, symbols, books and churches, we must always remember that it is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die in a church. If a man dies within the bounds of these forms, it shows that he has not grown, that there has been no uncovering of the real, the Divinity, within him.

True love can be regarded as a triangle. The first angle is, love knows no bargain. So when a man is praying to God, "give me this, and give me that," it is not love. How can it be? "I give you my little prayer, and you give me something in return;" that is mere shopkeeping. The second angle is, love knows no fear. So long as God is regarded as a rewarder or a punisher, there can be no love for him. The third angle, the apex, is, love is always the highest ideal. When we have reached the point where we can worship the ideal as the ideal, all arguments and doubts have vanished forever. The ideal can never escape, because it is part of our own nature.

In his lecture at Harvard University the Swami traced the history, so far as it is known, of the Vedanta philosophy, and showed to what extent the Vedas (the Hindu scriptures) are accepted as authoritative; merely as the foundation for the philosophy in so far as they appeal to the reason. He compared the three schools, the Dualists, who acknowledge a supreme being, and a lesser being manifesting in men, but eternally separate from men. Next he described the philosophy of the Qualified nondualists,

whose particular idea is that there is a God and there is nature, but that the soul of nature is simply the expansion, or the body of God, just as the body of man is to man's soul. They claim, in support of this theory, that the effect is never different from the cause, but that it is the cause reproduced in another form, and as God, therefore, is the cause of this universe, he is also the effect. The Monists, however, go a step farther and declare that if there is a God, that God must be both material and the efficient cause of the universe. Not only is he the Creator; but he is also the created. He himself is this universe, apparently; but, in reality, this universe does not exist—it is mere hypnotisation. Differentiation is in name and form only. There is but one soul in the universe, not two, because that which is immaterial cannot be bounded, must be infinite; and there cannot be two infinities, because one would limit the other. This soul is pure, and the appearance of evil is just as a piece of crystal, which is pure in itself, but appears to be variously colored when flowers are placed before it.

In discussing Raja Yoga ['Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion' at the Procopeia], the psychological way to union with God, the Swami expanded upon the power to which the mind can attain through concentration, both in reference to the physical and the spiritual world. It is the one method that we have in all knowledge. From the lowest to the highest, from the smallest worm to the highest sage, they have to use this one method. The astronomer uses it in order to discover the mysteries of the skies, the chemist in his laboratory, the professor in his chair. This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature and lets out the floods of light. This is the one key, the only power—concentration. In the present state of our bodies we are so much distracted, the mind is frittering away its energies upon a hundred sorts of things. By scientific control of the forces which work the body this can be done, and its ultimate effect is realization. Religion cannot consist of talk. It only becomes religion when it becomes tangible, and until we strive to feel that of which we talk so much, we are no better than agnostics, for the latter are sincere and we are not.

The Twentieth Century Club had the Swami as their guest Saturday [March 28], and heard an address from him on the "Practical Side of the Vedanta Philosophy." He leaves Boston today, and will, within a few days, sail for England, en route for India.

(To be concluded)

ST. PHILIP NERI

THE SAINT WHO WORE THE MASK OF HUMOUR

BRAHMACHARI BHUMACHAITANYA

If any person seemed divinely commissioned to lighten the Christian conscience of the sixteenth century—for it has always tended to be uncomfortably grave—it was St. Philip Neri of Rome. Perhaps no one in the history of western hagiography has been quite so jolly, so captivatingly outgoing or so delightfully eccentric. And as one reads the life of this contemporary of St. Teresa of Avila (both were born in the year 1515), one gradually becomes aware of a few of the devices saints employ to cover up their saintliness. Some retreat behind a mantle of silence; others, gravity and sternness. Philip used humour.

It is reported that one day four Poles, hearing of Philip's saintliness, went to see him—possibly expecting a miracle or some divine revelation. Philip settled them all around him and then unexpectedly began to read from the pages of Piovano Arlotto, a humorous writer of the period who was a favourite of Philip. Not only that, the saint added some sallies of his own, and laughed loudly and raucously at a number of the *risqué* passages.

'Well, there you are, my lads,' he said to them as they began to disperse in embarrassment, 'that's what I usually read. There's nothing like a funny book.'

On another occasion, he was told that a certain Attilio Serrano, a prelate who considered Philip unscholarly and boorish, was to attend his Mass. During the service, Philip made a point of blurting out all sorts of nonsense, piling one grammatical error upon another. When the Mass was over, the first thing he wanted to know was what sort of effect he had produced.

One of the misfortunes of history has been the distressing habit of its reporters to strip our heroes of the past—particularly the saintly ones—of most of their humanness. For instance, we simply cannot conceive of Plato committing an unwise act; of St. Francis, an irreligious one; or of Genghis Khan acting at all like a gentleman. We so strongly identify such figures with some extraordinary feat or pontifical statement, that the subtler, wiser, and perhaps more enlivening aspects of their character are lost to us. As Pascal wrote:

> 'People always imagine Plato and Aristotle dressed in the long robes of the pedagogue, but actually they were ordinary, decent people who used to joke with their friends like every one else, and when they amused themselves writing their *Laws* and their *Politics* they were simply playing a game: it was the least serious and philosophic part of their lives. *The more philosophic part was the quiet and simple way they lived.*' [1]
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> (Italics mine)

Philip is a bit of an anomaly. He wrote very little and since his personality was so astonishingly vital, we have left to us the impression of a warm, generous, and thoroughly *human* being, remarkably free of ecclesiastical trappings or biographical emendations. He is a friend, surely, who will walk into the room at any moment, clap us heartily on the shoulder, and with a wink ask us if we have been behaving ourselves.

At the same time, we must resist the temptation to view Philip Neri as merely a comic figure who spent his days poking fun at people or making them laugh. He did make them laugh (and sometimes appear

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1 Quoted in Marcel Jouhandeau's *St. Philip Neri* (Harper & Row, New York, 1960), p. 9.

ridiculous), it is true, but there was usually a purpose to it.

For instance, one of Philip's customs was to make a daily pilgrimage to the seven basilicas or ancient churches of Rome. Gradually, the number of persons in his entourage grew—although the pilgrimage meant several hours' walking—as Philip's personal magnetism drew more and more people to him. To one he would extend a smile, another a wave of the hand, a third a wink. None could resist him. In time, the group was made up of persons from all walks of life. Gentlemen rubbed shoulders with workmen and priests with laymen. Frequently the convoy would halt while they listened to an impromptu concert of musicians, or Philip would ask a child to speak to the group about God. It was as though the Lord had appointed Philip one of His court magicians, to cast upon His children the spell of laughter and gaiety, if even for a few hours, to ease the pain of their suffering.[2]

Later the processions became more organized. Philip would assemble the group before dawn. Then they would visit St. Peter's, where Philip would joyfully begin praying, followed by the others.

They would go to another church, singing as they went, where they would attend Mass and Communion. All the while Philip would joke and banter with the crowd, maintaining an aura of liveliness and joy. The group would have a simple breakfast together, and then visit the other basilicas.

During these walks, Philip had a special knack for dissolving class barriers, using his love to veil, for a few hours, the rifts that pride and profession had created in his followers. For instance, he might challenge a number of the more smartly dressed young men to climb the masts surrounding the castle of Sant' Angelo. Before long these gentlemen could be seen hanging by their hands from the forked gibbets, much to the amusement of the crowd. Or he might ask some distinguished person to carry the Cardinal's dog (who also had grown attached to Philip); another fellow would follow him with Philip's cat in a basket. All in all, it was one of the most bizarre and motley processions that had ever walked the streets of Rome.

Philip had a deeply charitable nature, and he partly encouraged such gatherings, particularly picnics, so that the poor of the city could be given a grand treat. Although food was in abundance, he rarely ate much himself. When others would comment on this, he would say: 'Tuck away, children, it makes me put on weight to watch you.'

One of his biographers wrote of him:

> 'Everything was either a joy or a joke to him. In this way he emerged triumphant over everything and everybody, and over every kind of social set-up in which he was involved, without being enslaved by any of them or by anything or anyone except God.'[3]

Philip's jocularity, however, in no way divorced him from the practical aspects of life. One of his enduring concerns was for Rome's sick and needy, during a time when such persons were nursed with little skill or affection. Drawing upon his persuasive powers, he convinced many of the educated and noble of Rome to offer their services.

Even here his talent for practical jokes helped him. A wealthy nobleman named Salviati was a devoted follower of Philip. While Salviati would be deep in prayer, he would sometimes feel his brocaded mantle

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[2] Goethe, who greatly admired Philip Neri, records in March, 1788, that 'this visitation [of the basilicas] is required of every pilgrim who comes to Rome for the Jubilee [or Holy Week, the week before Easter Sunday]. It must be accomplished in a single day, and, considering how far apart these churches are, this amounts to another long pilgrimage in itself.' *Italian Journey*, 1786-88 (Pantheon Books, New York, 1962), p. 484.

[3] Jouhandeau: *St. Philip Neri*, p. 13.

being removed from his shoulder and an apron replacing it. It was Philip's hint that his disciple had best go tend the sick in the hospitals.

Philip could literally get anyone to do his will. Fabrizio de Massimi wrote of him:

> 'He won me over so magnificently that I was never able to give him up. He used to accompany me in my carriage to get me to persevere in my religion, or else he would force me to follow him—a thing I had never done for anyone else—with many embraces and other signs of affection. He was such a lovable person and had such a charming way with him that he could get anyone to do exactly what he wanted.'

There is very little in Philip's early life to suggest either his extreme sociability or his whimsical nature. Perhaps the only incident in his childhood that might be called prankish was the time he rode a donkey down some cellar steps and very nearly broke his own neck. Until the age of twenty-nine, he lived almost entirely withdrawn from the world (he maintained a consistent love of solitude throughout his life), praying and meditating for long hours in a small room or in one of Rome's dark and deserted catacombs. And it was in one of those subterranean chambers, in 1544, that supposedly a divine 'ball of fire' from heaven entered his breast as he was praying. Such an extraordinary event was attested to for the remainder of his life by a protrusion in the region of his heart visible to all. A post-mortem examination, described in great detail by a doctor who examined his body, revealed that indeed his ribs had been forced out over a greatly enlarged heart.[4]

It is of interest to know that after this event, the temperature of Philip's body increased to such an extent that he refused an overcoat in even the coldest weather. When he came upon people who expressed astonishment at this amazing resistance to the cold, he would laugh and let them take hold of one of his hands, which was burning hot.

Philip's heart was, indeed, the source of his overflowing love and spiritual power. As his official biographer wrote:

> 'We find in him an effusion of divine love far more abundant than is strictly necessary to a saint; a certain kind of love, more visible, more fruitful, brighter, and more gentle than we find in other saints....'[5]

His love went particularly to children. He could often be found playing with them, taking part in their innocent games with a zest that belied his years. He developed a particular affection for one of them, a French boy by the name of Nicolo Gigli. When the the boy died quite suddenly, Philip was found in the church, where he imagined he was alone with the body of his young friend, caressing the boy's face and chest, smiling at him, then bursting into laughter. When Philip's friends expressed amazement at this behaviour, Philip replied that he had good reason to rejoice, for his 'Lily' (the meaning of *Gigli*) would be flowering for ever in heaven.

His way of treating the illnesses and mental problems of others usually involved, in one way or another, this generous heart. He seemed convinced that from his breast issued the source of God's grace. He would often clasp an ill person to him, and he was known to lie upon a person in extreme cases of suffering or temptation. But in many

4 Goethe ascribes Philip's abnormality to a more rational cause: 'We hear of his constant attendance at church ... of his fervent prayers, his wrestling for Grace, his frequent confessions and communions. At one such enthusiastic moment he threw himself down on the steps of the altar and broke some ribs, which, healed badly, made him suffer all his life from palpitations of the heart and intensified his emotions.' (*Italian Journey*, p. 328.)

5 Alfonso, Cardinal Capelcelatro: *The Life of St. Philip Neri* (Benziger Brothers, New York, 1926), p. 75.

instances the mere sound of his voice, the reassurance that all would be well, was enough to effect a cure. He told one woman, 'Antonia, I forbid you to be ill without my permission.' So, whenever she would feel particularly distraught she went to see him and her strength would return.

Nothing seemed more ridiculous to him than the thought that doctors alone could cure a patient. He would rebuke the doctors unmercifully. 'There's nothing more wrong with me than what you are putting me through,' he would tell them.

A woman with a number of children was about to die. 'For the children's sake', Philip told her, 'we must take heaven by storm.' He grew furious with her husband and the others who were resigned to her death, for they set limits to God's power and grace. Philip won the day and the woman recovered.

Like a number of other mystics, Philip resisted membership in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Though urged time and time again to become a priest in his early years, he remained quite happy with his role as lay chaplain to a number of Rome's young men. Eventually, however, Philip did yield to the pressures of the church and was ordained a priest at the age of thirty-six. But for the remainder of his life he stoutly declined the red hat of the cardinal, as well as a number of attempts to make him Pope. He did take a few courses in a theological school, but it was more to nourish his soul rather than seek any preferment in the church. He found it impossible to continue, however, because the sight of the crucifix hanging on the wall of the classroom would send him into rapture and he would be unable to absorb what the instructor was saying.

It was during this early period, in which he was living an utterly simple life, wandering the Roman countryside and spending long hours in prayer and meditation, that he first conceived the idea of the Oratory. This unusual confraternity of young men was informally organized in 1548, and met weekly in a church that had been made available to them. Its members, under the affectionate guidance of the ebullient Philip, were required to attend Holy Communion together each Sunday (though frequent communion was rare in those days), then attend service in the Church of San Girolano. In the afternoon, they met together to engage in *ragionamenti* or spiritual discussions designed to intensify their spiritual lives. Quite often Philip would begin the talks with a fervent sermon on the necessity for practising religious disciplines or offer some moving statement on the joys of spiritual life. He spoke with warmth and a simple, unadorned eloquence. One of his disciples, who attended many of these sessions, records that Philip's manner was so easy, so congenial and spontaneous that it was impossible for any to shun him, and that men of the world became attached to him with an everlasting devotion.

The congregation that Philip founded was really an attempt to join the natural and supernatural elements in man in the most agreeable and beneficial relationship possible. Philip's experiment, to say the least, was quite a sensation in his day. What other religious group required its members, both laymen and priests, to pay their own living expenses? Or permit voluntary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (knowing full well that only then will they be truly effective)?

The Oratory was a reflection of Philip's own unusual character. It was disciplined, yet unsystematic; unconventional and individualistic; yet thoroughly devotional. In its administrative procedures, the Oratory reflected Philip's well-known dislike for autocracy. 'All that was organized and exacting displeased St. Philip,' said Cardinal Newman. The Superior, for instance, though

honoured as titular head of the congregation, is not free from contributing to the ordinary tasks necessary to the group—including that of waiting at table. Unlike other religious, the Oratorians can call to account, depose, or restore any superior without recourse to outside authority.

Today, three Oratorian houses are to be found in the United States at Rock Hill, South Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Monterey, California. They have a combined priest-layman membership of 33. Two congregations exist in England at Birmingham (founded by Cardinal Newman in 1847) and in London. There are, in all, about 530 Oratorians living in 52 autonomous congregations throughout the world.

In the nearly four centuries that have passed since Philip Neri's death, the Oratory has experienced the effects of the changing years. Much, of course, has not changed. Each of the congregations still remains autonomous (remarkably similar, in this respect, to the Vedanta societies in the West) and resist attempts at centralization with an undiminished vigour. Nor do they appear to have lost the sense of community service inspired by St. Philip's teachings.[6]

At the same time, one cannot help but sense a departure today from the strict injunctions of Philip regarding mental prayer, an art he taught innumerable times during the early days of the Oratory. With an insight that seems common to nearly all saints, Philip knew that good works must be supported by a well-established inner life. For perhaps the first time in their inexperienced and thoughtless lives, the young men Philip gathered about him were to taste the sweetness of contemplation. It was from these seeds, we must recall, that the organization sprang.

One of his most distinguished recruits was Giambattista Salviati, whom we have earlier mentioned, a nephew to Pope Leo X and a cousin to the Queen of France. There was also Tarugi, the perfect courtier—eloquent, urbane, a judge of fine horses and beautiful women. But under Philip's influence, Tarugi became completely transformed. 'I was an open window to every sort of caprice,' he wrote. 'But after confessing to Philip for the first time I felt a flame burning within myself that no sins that I committed could ever extinguish, and it went on goading me until I put myself entirely in his hands.'

These were the sort of men that Philip attracted to his divine net. Soon the Oratory was drawing persons from all walks of life, priests as well as laymen, all searching to broaden their spiritual lives under the guidance of this remarkable soul.

Spiritual power has the same mysterious characteristics as any other force whose source is unavailable to our senses. Rarely does this force fully manifest itself. In Philip's case, the spiritual power that lay within him seemed ever ready to burst the confines of his body, to overflow that fragile vessel which contained it. Philip was particularly sensitive to exposing this inner fire to others. Often, when he felt things getting out of control, he would either adopt an air of bravado or resort to some expression of humour or apparent anger to throw others off the scent. He was reported to have actually slapped a number of persons who

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6 In a recent letter to the author, Father Joseph A. Wahl, Superior of the Rock Hill Oratory, writes: 'We have not departed a great deal from the structure and purpose of the Oratories in St. Philip's day. The structure was always very minimal. People voluntarily living together with just a minimum amount of structure, rules, etc. We do still have priests and laymen. We are not religious in the strict legal sense of the word ... [We] freely follow poverty, chastity, and obedience [i.e., these vows are voluntary]. We still do work very much in the hospitals. However, I would not want you to have the impression that we conduct hospitals and staff them. Rather, like St. Philip, we see very much the apostolic dimensions of visiting the sick in hospitals. ...'

sought to flatter him.

Some mention has been made of Philip's unconventional social behaviour. Much of it, so outlandish and bizarre, can be only judged as we judge the behaviour of anyone who has transcended the laws of society by renouncing its claims on him. For instance, Philip always found it difficult to obey the decorum of dress. It was often when he was expected to appear respectable that he showed his eccentric nature. He might, for instance, add a petticoat to his attire or white shoes would be seen peeping out from under his cassock. In his old age, he wore a scarlet garment indoors in combination with a variety of other oddly assorted articles.

One day a Roman lady, proud of an opportunity to introduce Philip to some of her friends, held a reception in his honour at her home. One can well imagine her shock when Philip arrived with one half of his face clean-shaven and the other sporting a week's growth of beard! In this, his own peculiar way, he discouraged praise and sought humility.

Philip was ever ready to unmask the spiritual pretender. His test was not always so gentle. One famous story connected with him concerns his investigation, at the request of the Pope, into the case of a nun who was gaining a reputation for miracle working. She lived in a country convent several miles from Rome. Philip obediently rode on his favourite mule and paid a visit to the convent. But he returned much sooner than expected. He told the surprised Pope:

> 'Holy Father, she does not perform miracles because she is lacking in the first Christian virtue, humility. I arrive at the convent, bespattered with mud and drenched by the rain. I hold out my boot to her and indicate that she is to pull it off. She recoils indignantly and angrily refuses my request. What do I take her for, she shouts. She is the handmaid of the Lord, not of anyone who comes to demand a menial service of her. I get up calmly, mount my mule, and here I am, convinced that you will not find another test necessary.'[7]

Philip's common-sense approach was well known, and he often resorted to dispensing quite candid advice. For instance, if a girl showed signs of hysteria or other weaknesses connected with growing up, he might say, 'Marry her.' Or if caught in a lie, 'Give her the stick, then.'

The highest and most moving part of Philip's day was the Mass. It was here he had to exert great caution, or he might suddenly be thrown into a state of ecstasy, which, of course, would halt the entire proceedings. To keep his mind occupied during the preparations for Mass, he would often ask that little birds or dogs be brought into the sacristy for him to play with. Or he would ask others to read secular poems to him. Many were scandalized by these goings-on; but few realized his inner condition, that all these distractions were necessary if he was to avoid the absorption in ecstasy.

As soon as the Mass commenced, and Philip made the sign of the cross, he became a changed person. He said it as fast as he possibly could, for fear that he would fall into a rapture, or perhaps be lifted a foot in the air. (There are numerous recorded instances of Philip Neri's levitations.)

Sometimes his body would sway or he would begin a quick-time hop from one foot to another, as though he were dancing. Many times he would turn to the server at the altar addressing some pointless remark to him such as, 'Send those dogs away!' All such devices were attempts to prevent his mind from soaring in union with the Lord.

He was not always successful. If he was getting dressed, for instance, and there was nobody in attendance, he might be found an

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[7] Recorded in Goethe: *Italian Journey*, p. 334.

hour later still holding an article of clothing, his hand sketching the air.

During the final few years of Philip's life, his attempts at preaching were sometimes only a single cry, followed by silence.

On one occasion, when expected to say a few words after the regular sermon, he suddenly put his hands up to his face and burst into sobs. A person near him thought he heard him mutter, 'Oh, people who want to have ecstasies do not know what they are like.'

At times, his body would stiffen until it was rigid as a corpse, or move uncontrollably. Fabrizio de Massimi relates that he often would go in Philip's room and find him struggling with himself; he would look at Fabrizio without seeing him.

Once, during Mass, his eyes suddenly shone with a great beauty. His body became motionless and rigid, and he stared fixedly at the Host. Two priors left their prayers and went up to Philip. They found him cold as ice, deprived of all sensibility, deaf to every word addressed to him. They rubbed his hands without effect, and immediately assumed he was in some kind of a fit. He was moved to a cell and remained in that condition for a long time. At last the ecstasy abated and in a state of joy Philip related to them, 'I have seen Jesus Christ visibly present in the consecrated Host, and with his most sacred hand blessing all of us who were there praying.'

The painting we have of him in old age shows him seated at a desk, his eyes large and luminous, expressing a serious, yet joyful countenance. Giovenale Ancina described Philip toward the end of his life: 'He is a splendid looking old man with hair white as ermine; his skin is as delicate as a girl's. If he lifts his hand up and it happens to be against the sun, it looks transparent, just like alabaster.'

Philip Neri passed out of the body in 1595, only a few months short of eighty, after predicting the exact time of his death. Yet even during the last few days he was still bounding up the stairs like a boy and indulging in his whimsical joking. At two in the morning, the hour he had foretold, he sat up in bed and had only sufficient time to extend his blessing before he fell back dead.

He was canonized by virtual acclaim, despite his unorthodoxy, which could well have worked against a man of lesser humanity and saintliness. But the people loved him, and there are few who can successfully resist that will. The canonization process began only two months after Philip's passing away, on August 2, 1595, when a hundred and ninety-four witnesses appeared on his behalf. Twenty-seven years later, on March 12, 1622, he was declared a saint by Gregory XV.

Goethe perhaps best summed up the character of Philip Neri when he wrote:

> 'Man is an extraordinarily complex being, in whose nature absolutely contradictory elements coexist, the physical and the spiritual, the possible and the impossible, the attractive and the repellent, the bound and the unbound.... In Neri's case, all these opposites overtly manifested themselves, confusing the intellect by thrusting the incomprehensible upon it, unleashing imagination, outwinging faith, justifying superstition, juxtaposing and even uniting the most normal states with the most abnormal. It is not surprising, therefore, that such a man, working untiringly for nearly a century and on a vast stage, should have had the influence he did.'[8]

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8 Goethe: *Italian Journey*, p. 336.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: BALARAM BOSE

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Balaram Bose (1842-1890) came of a wealthy family of devout Vaiṣṇavas. His father, Radharaman Bose, used to spend most of his time in the repetition of God's name. He owned much property in Orissa and had built temples to Radhakrishna in Kothar, Vrindavan, and other places, establishing free guest-houses as well. Balaram inherited his father's devotion to God and dispassion towards worldly life. He entrusted the management of his estate and other property to his cousins and remained satisfied with what they gave him as monthly allowance. Prior to his meeting with Sri Ramakrishna he had been at Puri, where he had lived more than eleven years, spending his time, despite the responsibilities to his wife and children, in the repetition of God's name and in holy company, and visiting daily the temple of Jagannāth. His father and cousins had become greatly concerned lest Balaram should renounce worldly life, and had persuaded him to live in the house at 57, Ramkanta Basu Street, Calcutta, purchased by his cousin Hariballav.

The thought of being deprived of the company of holy men and of his daily visit to the temple of Jagannāth made him feel dejected, no doubt.[1] Nevertheless he accepted the proposal, for it suited his predilection at the time. While in Puri he had read in the papers conducted by Keshab Chandra Sen about Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and felt a desire to see him. Having written to Ramdayal, a young Brahmin who lived at the Boses' Calcutta residence and who had visited Sri Ramakrishna several times, he received a reply after ten weeks.[2] The pen-picture of the Saint of Dakshineswar given by Ramdayal fascinated Balaram so much that he readily accepted the former's suggestion of visiting the Saint soon. He hurried to Calcutta and started for Dakshineswar the very next day. It seems he had intended to go back to Puri after a short stay. But he did not return, or rather he could not. That however is a later part of the story, the beginning of which we are going to narrate here.

It was very probably the first day of the year of 1881.[3] Balaram left for Dakshineswar in the company of Ramdayal.[4] When they reached Dakshineswar it was late afternoon. It was not difficult to find out Sri Ramakrishna for he was then playing host, entertaining Keshab Chandra Sen and a large number of Brahmo devotees.

Keshab had arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon. A *kīrtan* (devotional singing) was arranged. Keshab and others joined it. No doubt Sri Ramakrishna was the centre of attraction. The party started from the

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1 Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 4, 1956), p. 859; and Baikunthanath Sanyal: *Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Līlāmṛita* (Bengali), p. 355.

2 Akshay Kumar Sen: *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Punthi* (Bengali), p. 272.

3 If we scrutinize the conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab as recorded in *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Punthi* (5th Ed.), p. 273, particularly the story of the 'fish-wife in a flower garden', we find its close similarity with the proceedings of January 1, 1881, as recorded in: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947) pp. 1003-06. If we accept these records of *Punthi* and the *Gospel* (appendix) as dependable, we can safely conclude that Balaram's first visit took place on January 1, 1881.

4 Gurudas Burman: *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇacarit* (Bengali), p. 264.

Panchavati and soon moved towards Sri Ramakrishna's room. Hriday blew the horn, Gopidas played the drum, and two devotees played the cymbals. Sri Ramakrishna danced vigorously and went into *samādhi*. Regaining consciousness of the outer world, he sat down in his room and began to talk with Keshab and others. The audience heard with rapt attention the Master's words :

> 'One should cry for God that way, like a child. That is what it means to be restless for God. One doesn't enjoy play or food any longer. After one's experiences of the world are over, one feels this restlessness and weeps for God.'[5]

It was about this time, or perhaps a little earlier, that Balaram and his companion entered Sri Ramakrishna's room. It was twilight. The room was crowded, and some people were standing outside. Balaram bowed low to the ground, and took the dust of Sri Ramakrishna's feet. Sri Ramakrishna returned his visitor's greeting. Of fair complexion and medium stature, Balaram had a beard and wore his clothes like a Bengali, but on his head was a white turban tied after the fashion of the Sikhs.[6] He was about thirtynine. His great humility, sweet manners, and smiling face were indicative of the rich qualities of his heart. As was his nature,[7] he quietly seated himself in one corner of the room. It is very likely that Ramdayal introduced Balaram to Sri Ramakrishna at some opportune moment.

Sri Ramakrishna at once recognized him as a person destined by the Divine Mother to be a close devotee whose arrival he was long awaiting. Later Sri Ramakrishna said about Balaram, 'He is a devotee of the inner circle of the great lord, Sri Chaitanya. He belongs to this place (meaning himself). I witnessed in ecstasy how the great lord Chaitanya, together with the revered souls Advaita and Nityananda, brought about a flood of Hari's name in the country and inebriated a number of men, women and children by means of Sankirtan sung by a wonderful party in which I saw him (Balaram).'[8] Since this vision Balaram's face, serenely bright with the light of devotion, was imprinted for ever on Sri Ramakrishna's memory.[8] Therefore it was not difficult for him to recognize Balaram now.[9]

Sri Ramakrishna was then about fortyfive years old. With his smiling face, beaming with the joy of God-inebriation, he stole Balaram's heart at first sight, causing in it a strong stir, the reason for which Balaram hardly knew. He instinctively felt Sri Ramakrishna to be his very own. His sweet words fascinated him tremendously. In the meantime Balaram took some time off to look at the famous Brahmo leader Keshab, whom he found sitting quietly, listening to the words of Sri Ramakrishna with wonder in his eyes.

After a while Hridayram announced that it was time for the guests to partake of the *prasāda* (consecrated food) of the Goddess Kālī. Sri Ramakrishna, too, requested Keshab and others to take their seats which

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5 *The Gospel*, p. 1005.

6 *Punthi*, p. 271.

7 A typical picture of Balaram has been painted by M' in the *Gospel*, p. 18 : 'When the music was over, the devotees sat down for their meal. Balaram stood there humbly, like a servant. Nobody would have taken him for the master of the house.'

8 *The Great Master*, pp. 813-4, 645.

9 On Balaram's second visit to Dakshineswar, which took place the next morning, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Well, the Mother told me that you are my own, that you are one of the suppliers of needs (*rasaddārs*) of the Mother. Many things for this place are stored up there at your house. Purchase some things and send them here.' (Gurudas Burman : op. cit., p. 197.) Swami Saradananda remarked, 'We do not remember the Master to have ever mentioned Balaram to be one of the suppliers of his provision. But the privilege of his service which we have seen appeared to us to be very extraordinary.' (*The Great Master*, p. 646).

had been placed on the eastern veranda adjacent to the Master's room. Keshab and other invitees gradually went there.

Now Sri Ramakrishna beckoned Balaram to come close to him and said, 'Now tell me what you have to say.'

Balaram asked, 'Sir, does God exist ?'

'Surely, God does exist,' came the prompt reply.

'Then, can one have His vision ?'

'God reveals Himself to the devotee who thinks of Him as his nearest and dearest. Because you do not get response by praying to Him once, you must not conclude that He does not exist. Because stars cannot be seen in sunlight, would you say that no stars exist during the day ?'

Balaram humbly submitted, 'Why do I not find Him then, even after so much of prayer ?'

Sri Ramakrishna smilingly said, 'Well, do you pray to God with the same kind of intimate relationship with Him, as one has with one's children and grandchildren ?'

The simple-minded Balaram confessed, 'No, sir, I don't think I have ever taken Him as my nearest and dearest.'

Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Pray to God, thinking of Him as dearer than your very self. I assure you, He is much attached to His devotees. He comes to a man even before He is sought. If the devotee goes one step towards Him, He advances towards the devotee by ten steps. There is none more intimate and affectionate than God.'[10]

Balaram had never before heard God spoken of so convincingly. Every word of Sri Ramakrishna seemed true to him. Though he had done spiritual practices for many years, he had not done them with any such intensity of feeling. Balaram saw a new light in Sri Ramakrishna's words. Spiritual life of a new dimension dawned on him.

Balaram along with others sat for the feast given by Sri Ramakrishna. The guests were served on leaf-plates, first with puffed rice, coconut, ginger etc. ; then with *luchi* and various kinds of curries ; and finally with curd and sweets. Sri Ramakrishna himself supervised the sumptuous dinner to the great merriment of all. Jadu Mallick, one of Sri Ramakrishna's devotees, bore the expenses.[11]

Dinner over, Sri Ramakrishna went to the Panchavati with Keshab and other devotees and engaged himself again in religious discourses. About eleven o'clock the Brahmo devotees became anxious to go home, and, after a little more conversation, look leave of Sri Ramakrishna.

Balaram prostrated himself at Sri Ramakrishna's feet before he took leave. Sri Ramakrishna told him endearingly, 'Come again, please.' Balaram left for home, but left behind his mind, as it were, at Dakshineswar. So much enchanted was he with the holy company of Sri Ramakrishna that he hurried back to Dakshineswar the very next morning.

Balaram soon became absorbed with thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna:

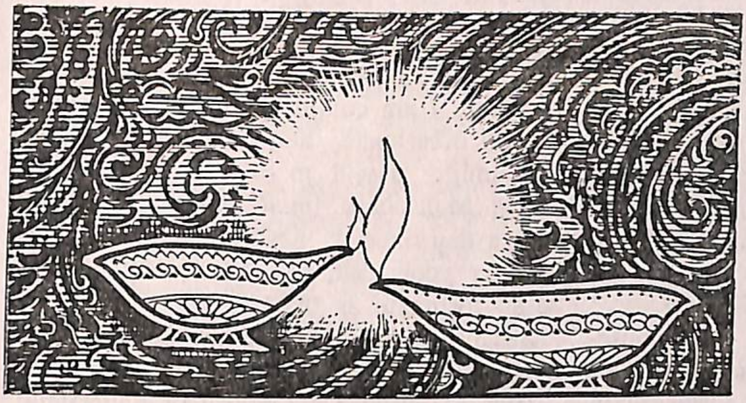
> 'Keeping the Master's company, Balaram underwent wonderful transformations as he went forward in the spiritual realm with a rapid step. Going beyond the limit of external worship and other kinds of ritualistic devotion enjoined by the scriptures, he could, in a short time, live in the world completely reliant on God and able to discriminate the Real from the unreal. Offering his all—his own life, his wife, son, wealth, etc., at His lotus feet and living like a servant of His in His world, ever ready to carry out His commands, Balaram came to have

(*Continued on p.* 273)

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10 This dialogue is after Gurudas Burman : op. cit., pp. 195-6.

11 *Punthi*, p. 273.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

A SAINT MEETS A SAGE

[Swami Vivekananda and Saint Durgacharan Nag, both eminent disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, demonstrated in their lives two seemingly opposite ideals, the former of looking upon the whole universe as oneself and the latter of complete self-abnegation. The following dialogue between them took place at Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at the beginning of 1899. Two points are specially worth noting: First, the mutual reverence and love that these two had. Second, Nag Mahashaya unequivocally endorses Vivekananda's founding of the Ramakrishna Mission and undertaking of altruistic activities which were being questioned and criticized by some orthodox sections at the time.

The recorder who refers to himself as 'disciple' in the dialogue was Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, B.A., a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and a close associate of Nag Mahashaya. He has also written the Saint's biography in Bengali.

This dialogue has been reproduced with slight changes from the seventh volume of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.*

—*Ed.*]

The disciple has today come to the Belur Math with Nag Mahashaya in company.

Swamiji to Nag Mahashaya (*saluting him*): You are all right, I hope ?

Nag Mahashaya: I have come today to visit you. Glory to Śaṅkara! Glory to Śaṅkara! I am blessed today verily with the sight of Śiva!

Saying these words, Nag Mahashaya out of reverence stood with joined hands before him.

Swamiji: How is your health ?

Nag Mahashaya: Why are you asking about this trifling body—this cage of flesh and bones ? Verily I am blessed today to see you.

Saying these words, Nag Mahashaya prostrated himself before Swamiji.

Nag Mahashaya: I see with my inner eye that today I am blessed with the vision of Śiva Himself. Glory to Ramakrishna!

Swamiji (*addressing the disciple*): Do you see ? How real *bhakti* (devotion to God) transforms human nature! Nag Mahashaya has lost himself in the Divine, his body-consciousness has vanished altogether. (*To Swami Premananda*) Get some *prasāda* (consecrated food) for Nag Mahashaya.

Nag Mahashaya: *Prasāda*! (*To Swamiji with folded hands*) Seeing you, all my earthly hunger has vanished today.

The *brahmacārins* (novices) and *sannyā*-

sins (monks) of the monastery were studying the Upaniṣads. Swamiji said to them. 'To-day a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna has come amongst us. Let it be a holiday in honour of Nag Mahashaya's visit to the Math.' So all closed their books and sat in a circle round Nag Mahashaya; Swamiji also sat in front of him.

Swamiji (*addressing all*): Do you see? Look at Nag Mahashaya; he is a householder, yet he has no knowledge of the mundane existence; he always lives lost in Divine consciousness. (*To Nag Mahashaya*) Please tell us and these *brahmacārins* something about Sri Ramakrishna.

Nag Mahashaya (*in reverence*): What do you say, sir? What shall I say? I have come to see you—the hero, the helper in the divine play of Sri Ramakrishna. Now will people appreciate his message and teachings. Glory to Ramakrishna!

Swamiji: It is you who have really appreciated and understood Sri Ramakrishna. We are only spent in useless wanderings.

Nag Mahashaya: What do you say, sir? You are the image of Sri Ramakrishna—the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Those who have eyes, let them see.

Swamiji: Is the starting of these *maṭhs* and *āśramas* etc. a step in the right direction?

Nag Mahashaya: I am an insignificant being, what do I understand? Whatever you do, I know for a certainty, will conduce to the well-being of the world—aye, of the world.

Many out of reverence proceeded to take the dust of Nag Mahashaya's feet, which made him much agitated. Swamiji, addressing all, said, 'Don't act so as to cause pain to Nag Mahashaya; he feels uncomfortable.' Hearing this everybody desisted.

Swamiji: Do please come and stay at the *Maṭh* (Belur Monastery). You will be an object-lesson to the boys here.

Nag Mahashaya: I once asked Sri Ramakrishna about that, to which he replied, 'Stay as a householder as you are doing.' Therefore I am continuing in that life. I see you all occasionally and feel myself blessed.

Swamiji: I will go to your place once.

Nag Mahashaya (*mad with joy*): Shall such a day dawn? My place will be made holy by your visit, like Vārāṇasī. Shall I be so fortunate as that!

Swamiji: Well, I have the desire. Now it depends on 'Mother' to take me there.

Nag Mahashaya: Who will understand you? Unless the inner vision opens, nobody can understand you. Only Sri Ramakrishna understood you; all else have simply put faith in his words, but none has understood you really.

Swamiji: Now my one desire is to rouse the country—the sleeping leviathan that has lost all faith in his power and makes no response. If I can wake it up to a sense of the Eternal Religion then I shall know that Sri Ramakrishna's advent and our birth are fruitful. That is the one desire in my heart: *mukti* (salvation) and all else appear of no consequence to me. Please give me your blessings that I may succeed.

Nag Mahashaya: Sri Ramakrishna will bless! Who can turn the course of your will? Whatever you will, shall come to pass.

Swamiji: Well, nothing comes to pass without his will behind it.

Nag Mahashaya: Your will and his have become one. Whatever is your will is his. Glory to Sri Ramakrishna!

Swamiji: To work one requires a strong body; since coming to this country, I am not doing well; in the West I was in very good health.

Nag Mahashaya: Whenever one is born in a body, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'One has to pay the house tax.' Disease and sorrow are the tax. But your body is a box of gold mohurs, and very great care should be taken of it. But who will do it? Who

will understand? Only Sri Ramakrishna understood. Glory to Ramakrishna!

Swamiji: All at the *Maṭh* take great care of me.

Nag Mahashaya: It will be to their good if they do it, whether they know it or not. If proper attention is not paid to your body, then the chances are that it will fall off.

Swamiji: Nag Mahashaya, I do not fully understand whether what I am doing is right or not. At particular times I feel a great inclination to work in a certain direction, and I work according to that. Whether it is for good or evil, I cannot understand.

Nag Mahashaya: Well, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'The treasure is now locked.'—Therefore he does not let you know fully. The moment you know it, your play of human life will be at an end.

Swamiji was pondering something with steadfast gaze. Then Swami Premananda brought some *prasāda* for Nag Mahashaya who was ecstatic with joy.

Shortly after, Nag Mahashaya found Swamiji slowly digging the ground with a spade near the pond, and held him by the hand saying, 'When we are present, why should you do that?' Swamiji, leaving the spade, walked about the garden talking the while, and began to narrate to a disciple: 'After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away we heard one day that Nag Mahashaya lay fasting in his humble tiled lodgings in Calcutta. Swami Turiyananda, I, and another went together and appeared at Nag Mahashaya's cottage. Seeing us he rose from his bed. We said, "We shall have our *bhikṣā* (food) here today." At once Nag Mahashaya brought rice, cooking pot, fuel, etc. from the bazaar and began to cook. We thought that we would eat and make Nag Mahashaya also eat. Cooking over, he gave the food to us; we set apart something for him and then sat down to eat. After this, we requested him to take food; he at once broke the pot of rice and striking his forehead began to say, "Shall I give food to the body in which God has not been realized?" Seeing this we were struck with amazement. Later on after much persuasion we induced him to take some food and then returned.'

Swamiji: Will Nag Mahashaya stay in the *Maṭh* tonight?

Disciple: No, he has some work; he must return today.

Swamiji: Then look for a boat. It is getting dark.

When the boat came, the disciple and Nag Mahashaya saluted Swamiji and started for Calcutta.

(*Continued from p.* 270)

only one aim in life, namely, to live in the holy company of the Master as much as possible.'[12]

Sri Ramakrishna visited his house at 57, Ramkanta Basu Street, more than one hundred times.[13] This was definitely more than he visited any other house in Calcutta. If Dakshineswar temple could be called the 'fort of Kali the Mother', as Sri Ramakrishna sometimes jokingly called it, Balaram's residence could be called 'Her second fort'. Not only Balaram but all the members of his family were 'strung to the same tune', according to Sri Ramakrishna.[14]

12 *The Great Master,* p. 814

13 Balaram Bose recorded the visits on the pages of the almanac; see Baikunthanath Sanyal: op. cit., p. 358. 'M' in *The Gospel,* p. 700, has observed, 'Blessed is Balaram! Your home has today become the chief centre of the Master's ministration! What a number of devotees he has attracted here and with what love he has tied them together. And how he dances and sings with them as did Sri Chaitanya, who opened a veritable fair of love in the courtyard of Srivasa.'

14 *The Great Master,* p. 648.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947. References: Question 1, p. 677; Question 2, p. 749; Questions 3, 4, and 5: pp. 800-801.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works,* Vol. II (1963), pp. 173-4.

Strangely enough man normally makes the least possible use of the most beneficent power given to him—the power of purity. This month's editorial underscores the urgency of the creative role this mostly unused power can play in shaping the future of man.

The second instalment of 'Swami Vivekananda in Boston, March 1896' brings to our readers interesting and valuable information about Swamiji's work in Boston at the close of his first American visit. In addition to the informative report of the Boston *Evening Transcript,* Mrs. Burke has unearthed a couple of interesting letters written by Prof. J. H. Wright to his wife, containing details of Swamiji's visit to and dialogue with the Professor, and one unpublished letter of Swami Vivekananda written to Prof. Wright from London.

A 'Mystic in motley' was how a biographer described St. Philip Neri. Philip Neri had all the qualities of head and heart of a saint perfectly hidden under a veneer of good humour and an unconventional behaviour. It speaks volumes for the good sense of his contemporaries, both ecclesiastical and lay, that they could discover his saintliness though held under a disguise. That he was even offered the cardinal's red hat and the holy seat of the pontiff—which honours he stoutly declined—should make it clear to anyone that his spirituality and divine love were extraordinary. He is well known in the Catholic Christian world as the founder of the Congregation of the Oratory. A readable sketch of this holy man is contributed by Brahmachari Bhumachaitanya, of the Ramakrishna Order, now residing in the Ramakrishna Monastery, Trabuco, Southern California. If circumstances prove favourable, this contribution may well prove to be the beginning of a series of such articles on Christian saints.

In our March issue the introduction to *First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna* was published. In this number we are giving the first of the series, an account of Sri Ramakrishna's meeting with Balaram Bose. The author, Swami Prabhananda, is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE STORY OF KRISHNA; SHAKUNTALA; THE PANDAVA PRINCES; SAVITRI; THE STORY OF RAMA; NALA DAMAYANTI; HARISCHANDRA; BUDDHA; SHIVAJI; PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN; KARNA; KACHA DEVAYANI: ALL EDITED BY ANANT PAI, Published by Indian Book House Education Trust, 249, D. N. Road, Bombay 1, all pp. 32, Price Rs. 1.50 each.

Most of the titles under review, with the exception of *Prithviraj Chauhan, Shivaji,* and *Buddha* which are historical in origination, are tales, either partial or complete, from the three principal *puranic* epics—the *Ramayana, Mahabharata,* and *Bhagavatam.* The practical function of these epics lies essentially in their ability to transmit metaphysical, theological, philosophical, devotional and ethical ideals to the minds of the young and the 'uneducated' masses. These ideas are clothed, woven into, the deeds of archetypal characters—the bad and demonic, and the good and divine—and thereby made easier to grasp, understand and remember. Yet there can be quite an amount of history, too, embedded in the epics. These epics have grown and developed over the centuries, and in many respects have acted as a highly cohesive force for Indian civilization and culture. Divorced from this educational worth, the stories of the *puranas* have very little intrinsic worth. They become simply stories, with very little to impart to the reader. This is rather the fate of the following of the titles under review: the *Ramayana,* which usually in full translation fills some three volumes, is squashed into 32 pages of pictures and word-bubbles, in *The Story of Rama.* The *Bhagavatam* which is also quite large, fills the same space in *The Story of Krishna*; and finally, the 100,000 verses of the *Mahabharata* are published under two titles—*The Pandava Princes,* and *Karna.* Thus one finds that the original message or worth of the books, as noted earlier, is lost, and the final result of this ultimate in abridgement is that one is left with a story: a heroic story, a story of loyalty, of wars, of the victory of good over evil, and of final happiness. And it is in these values that their worth now tends to lie. There has simply been a transmutation of values.

With *Nala Damayanti, Shakuntala, Kacha Devayani, Savitri* and *Harischandra*—all of which initially derive from the *puranas* as minor stories, the value is of a somewhat different nature. With the first three titles, the stories are of an essentially romantic nature, and would most probably appeal to young children, especially girls. With *Savitri,* there is a different message—that of a wife's fidelity to her husband, the following of her *dharma,* and so on. *Harischandra* is also a fine story, and has many similarities with *Job* of the Old Testament. Harischandra's devotion to truth is as admirable today, and as worthy of emulation, as it was when the story was written.

The last three titles are all of a historical nature: *Prithviraj Chauhan, Shivaji,* and *Buddha.* The former two are both based on the lives of famous warriors and kings, and in such lives there always flourishes the heroic, patriotic element. These are no exception and should appeal to most young boys. *Shivaji* is the better of the two and contains an inherent love of freedom, as also adherence to one's *dharma* and a certain devotional element.

The best title has been left to the last: *Buddha.* The message of Buddha—his love for humanity, his search for a means of ending suffering, his *sadhana,* his enlightenment, and his teaching, 'it is freedom from desire that frees us from sorrow'—all this comes across to the reader in a simple clear manner.

Generally the stories of the *puranas* are transmitted by word of mouth, from mother or grandmother to child. Perhaps this is today becoming a thing of the past, but let us hope not. Let us hope rather that the majority of the titles above will have to act only as means, or sources of pleasure, for those already acquainted with these *puranic,* and often divine, characters,—and not as the only means of introduction. For children can, even at a very early age, understand far more than we often credit them. And the child sees with a clearness and purity that the adult lacks, for the child is not handicapped by social conventions, desires, and so forth. And if the minds of the young are well-formed at an early age then good character and virtue follow in later years.

As a form of communication, visual means—with the exception of art—are always rather limited. With literature the creative imagination has to fill in a lot of space. The picture only relays what it shows, it stimulates an immediate impression; and in consequence the imagination, if fed unduly upon such food, becomes atrophied. It breeds mental laziness. This is particularly regrettable

as regards children, as this is one of the principal disadvantages of the type of book dealt with above. However, this aside, all of the above titles are quite wholesome in content. There is nothing objectionable and they are infinitely more efficacious than the activities of 'Superman' and other such characters.

The texts of the above are all printed in four colours; the cover is in full colour. The art work is of the usual standard for such juveniles.

— T.

YOGA OF MEDITATION: BY CHAMAN LAL, Published by the author, 2789 N.E., 37th Drive, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, U.S.A., 1971, pp. 253, Price $ 7.50.

Thirtyone articles written by various writers have been brought together in this volume. They deal with all aspects of Yoga. Though Patanjali gave a systematic and scientific treatment to this subject in his *Yoga-sutras,* the practice of Yoga in the shape of practical mystical exercises goes back to very ancient times. After it received rational and systematic treatment at his hands, it began to command a very wide popularity. It crossed the frontiers of India and spread to other lands. Zen Buddhism, which has spread to Tibet, China, and Japan, had already prepared the ground for the acceptance by the people of these lands, of Yoga both in the sense of physical exercises and mental training.

Accordingly the compiler has collected articles written by eminent authorities on the subject in India and also by Chinese and Tibetan scholars. All the articles are very instructive and readable. Many writers give practical hints to control the fickleness that is natural to the mind and to make it one-pointed. Such concentration of mind is necessary to carry on meditation on the Supreme Being. When all the articles are of equal merit it would be invidious to select a few and make special mention of them. Every reader will find articles to suit his own taste and temperament.

At the end of the book, pictorial representation of some yogic *asanas* (postures) is given. One writer makes out that these *asanas* are by no means confined to men. Women can also practise them and derive great benefit. He goes to the extent of saying that the constitution of the female body is more suited to the practice of these *asanas* than the male body.

The printing and the general get-up of the book leave little to be desired, but some printing mistakes have remained undetected. It is hoped they will be corrected in the next edition of the book.

We commend the book to all who are interested in the theory and practice of Yoga.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAN-MAKING: A STUDY IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, BY SANTI L. MUKHERJI, Published by New Central Book Agency, 8/1 Chintamoni Das Lane, Calcutta 9, 1971, pp. 468, Price Rs. 20/-.

In this book the author makes an exhaustive study of the achievements of Swami Vivekananda in all their aspects, religious, social, educational, economic and political. The Swami's main aim was to build up a new and resurgent India on the ancient foundations of Hindu religion and spirituality. With this end in view he travelled far and wide propagating his new ideas and educating the people. He founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to ensure the continued working of his ideas and plans.

From his recorded writings and speeches which cover more than 4000 pages in print, the author has patiently sorted out the leading ideas under suitable heads. These are dealt with in twelve chapters.

Of these the first and the second deal with the nature of the renaissance which the Swami brought about. The next three deal with the meeting of Narendranath with Sri Ramakrishna and the thorough change which came upon the former in respect of his outlook on men and things. The Swami's conception of the social order, his political ideas and the brand of socialism which was acceptable to him, are dealt with in the next three chapters. How and to what extent the Swami influenced the thinking of the patriots of a later day like Tilak, Tagore, Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Subhashchandra Bose, are discussed in chapters ten and eleven. In the twelfth and last chapter we have an appraisal of the relief work carried on by the members of the Ramakrishna Mission. The basic and eternal ideas of the Swami are summarized in the Epilogue.

In the course of these discussions the author freely draws on his knowledge of the writings of western thinkers like J. S. Mill, Edmund Burke, August Comte, Tolstoy, and others. The quotations from these writers are quite pertinent and serve to put the Swami's ideas in their proper international perspective.

It is a readable book though a little prolix. After reading the entire book, one rises with the feeling that all that is said therein could well have been expressed a little more concisely.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

WHAT DOES YOUR SOUL LOOK LIKE?, ED. BY GAIL NORTHE, Published by Philosophical Library, New York, 1969, pp. 136, Price $6.95.

Here is a unique record of the responses of children to the challenge of Reality. Gail Northe, the author of this book was once asked, 'What does your soul look like?' She found the difficulty in answering it and put the same question to a number of adults whose replies were no replies at all. Then she asked this question of a number of children from 5 to 19 years of age and these pages present their answers in a striking manner. Here are a few of them:

'My soul looks like a seed' (age 8).

'My soul looks like a tiny bit of the whole universe' (age 12).

'It looks like a Railroad track that never ends' (age 10).

And then from a blind boy:

'It looks like me.'

To show how these spontaneous perceptions of the young in the mysteries of creation have been confirmed at a different level by the mystics and seers all over the world, down the ages, the author cites parallel passages from the Psalms, poets like Tagore and others highlighting the eternity, the divinity and the transparency of the soul.

A revealing and educative book.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

SANSKRIT

PRĀCĪNA-BHĀRATĪYA-MANOVIDYĀ: BY DINESH CHANDRA SHASTRI, Published by J. N. Sircar, Nagendra Prajna-Mandir, C/27 Bagha Jatin Palli, Calcutta-32.

The present work proposes to be a comprehensive work on Indian psychology. The task of the selection of relevant portions of the philosophical texts with psychological bearing must have been an uphill one. The learned author has eminently succeeded in marshalling them into a coherent whole. Vedic literature is interspersed with psychological speculations which were later invested with definite philosophical forms. The psychological theories expounded in the different orthodox systems of Indian philosophy as also in the heterodox Buddhist and Jaina systems gradually acquired an astounding degree of precision.

The present work, written in Sanskrit, covers a wide variety of topics of psychological import. The mind has naturally come in for an exhaustive treatment. The nature of the mind, the relation between the soul and mind, the vital principle, sense-organs, the theory of sense-contact, etc., have received well-deserved attention. The versatility of the author is evident in whatever subject matter he has taken up for elaboration. The nature of the mind as also other topics have been shown from different philosophical standpoints.

Pramana-sastra or epistemology forms the bed-rock of the *prameya-sastra* or metaphysics in Indian philosophy. Epistemological discussions have in Indian philosophy reached the acme of subtlety and precision. It is the wide intellectual sweep of the author that has enabled him not only to grapple with the formidable details of Indian philosophy but also to attempt a critical re-valuation of the findings of our ancient masters. In this stupendous task he has also not failed to demonstrate how modern he is in outlook.

The present work is of encyclopaedic scope inasmuch as all possible concepts of Indian philosophy in general and Indian psychology in particular have been critically presented with characteristic lucidity of expression. The learned author has to his credit other philosophical works in which he has given evidence of his sustained discursive thinking. There the exposition of the philosophical texts was made in Bengali. The same flair for ratiocination characterizes the present work also from the beginning to the end and the simplicity and perspicuity of the language do not in the least militate against its philosophical profundity. The book legitimately proposes to be a *vade-mecum* to all students of Indian psychology and philosophy who care for correct presentation of issues with reference to substantiating texts. The author has profusely drawn upon the acknowledged classics of Indian philosophy. This feature is writ large almost on every page of the work. It is indeed an intellectual treat which will not only immensely repay perusal but also inspire re-thinking on all topics of psychological interest.

SRI J. C. DATTA

BENGALI

RISHI AUROBINDO: By Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Published by Sadhana Som, Sabita Prakashan, New Alipore, Calcutta 53, pp. 158, Rs. 5/-.

The author says in the preface that he is personally indebted to three great men, namely, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi. He had offered his tributes to the first two during their birth centenaries. This biography is his humble tribute to Sri Aurobindo who had cautioned his admirers that they might murder him in the printed word. The biography of this great philosopher, poet, and patriot as presented by the author reflects our nation's history during Aurobindo's lifetime, breathes the spirit of the national life, and inspires mankind to fulfil a glorious destiny. The author has worked hard to collect authentic material to present the eventful life and works of this great Indian whose long and lonely spiritual practices were aimed at the descent of pure love on earth.

Born and brought up in an anglicized home, Aurobindo Acroid Ghosh had his school and college education in England. Returning to India, he learnt Indian languages, imbibed Indian culture, and immersed his soul in the spirit of her religion. He devoted himself to the cause of his Motherland, for he believed her to be verily his Mother. He revered and worshipped her as such. The partition of Bengal in 1905 ignited the fire of patriotism in the youth of the country and Aurobindo was one of the first to plunge into politics. His active political career, however, ended in 1910, not so much due to external events but rather to the surge of spirituality which had swept over him during his stay at Alipore Central Jail. On his release he declared at a public meeting held at Uttarpara that he had realized *Vasudevah sarvamiti* (God is verily everything) during his stay in the prison.

Subsequently he retired to Pondicherry where he spent his remaining forty valuable years. During this period he realized his integral Yoga, according to which we were 'to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine, to call Him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense God Himself, the real person in us, becomes the Sadhak of the Sadhana as well as the Master of the Yoga ...'. As he wrote:

'To raise the world to God in deathless light,
To bring God down to the world we came,
To change the earthly life to life divine.'

The great influence of Sri Ramakrishna and particularly of Vivekananda on Sri Aurobindo has been ably described. But Aurobindo's fusion of many currents of life into a broad current of spirituality has been brought out rather prosaically, thereby missing in a large measure the charm and beauty of his inner life.

While paying the highest tribute to the versatile personality of Sri Aurobindo, the author has not failed to notice that, instead of the descent of the supramental's transforming men into divine beings, the earth has been increasingly beset with darkness. He hopes that this is only transitory (p. 158). A rational thinker, Dr. Ghosh observes that the decomposition of the dead body of Sri Aurobindo was a natural process (p. 157), that he might have been a better orator in Bengali which he avoided presumably because of the natural weaknesses of scholars (p. 54), and so forth. This points out the author's boldness as well as his deep conviction. Dr. Ghosh has dwelt rather elaborately on Sri Aurobindo's political life, though this was confined to four years, as against the forty years of his religious life and work, to which a few pages only have been devoted. No doubt this period of his life remained a closed chapter to the outside world.

Nevertheless readers will definitely prize this book, a worthy contribution on the occasion of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary.

Swami Prabhananda

BOOKS RECEIVED

SWAMI BALANANDA: By S. Sivabrahmam, Published by Balananda Bhakta Brundamu, Devalayam Street, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, Rs. 5/-.

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES: A Selection of Essays, By D. M. Datta, Published by Bharati Bhawan, Patna 1, Rs. 20/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

DEDICATION OF THE NEW TEMPLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

The dedication ceremony of the newly erected temple of Sri Ramakrishna and the installation of his marble image in it, were performed at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Vrindaban, with great éclat. The ceremony started from the 7th February with the exposition of the glory of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. From 8th February through the 14th there was daily reading of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the morning and exposition of the same in the evening. On the 14th there were *Viṣṇupūjā* with *yajña* and *vāstupūjā* followed by *vāstu-yāga*. On the same day from 2-30 p.m. a procession was taken out from the Ashrama and went round the main streets of Vrindaban with the portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Śrī Gauranga accompanied by *bhajan* (devotional singing) parties. On the 14th evening the preliminary rites of invocation, etc, of the image were performed according to the scriptures. On the 15th, the day of installation, at 7-00 a.m. a procession started from the old shrine, with Swami Vireswaranandaji carrying the holy relics of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Dayananda, the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Gauriswarananda, the picture of the Holy Mother, and Swami Apurvananda, the picture of Swami Vivekananda. The procession was led by monks of the Order with ochre-coloured festoons, a pitcher filled with water, and a cow with calf. Parched rice and flower petals were showered upon the holy relics and pictures. Sankirtan and singing parties accompanied the procession. More than 500 devotees from various places and nearly 110 monks of the Ramakrishna Order joined in the procession, carrying lighted incense sticks. While the procession wended its way toward the new temple, the atmosphere seemed surcharged with spiritual fervour, serenity, and joy. After going round the temple three times, the procession entered it, and the holy relics were placed by Swami Vireswaranandaji on the altar on which the statue had been placed. The pictures were also placed on the different wooden thrones. Special *pūjā* started from 7-30 a.m. and continued till 4-00 p.m. with *havan* and dedication of the temple to the presiding deity. There were also *saptaśatī-homa* and chanting of the *Gītā* and the *Caṇḍī* on this day. There was *Kālīpūjā* during the night till 4-00 a.m. next day, and *virajā-homa* from 5-30 a.m. On the evening of the 15th, there was also a dance-drama depicting *Rāsa-līlā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's disport with the *Gopīs*.

On the 16th February, *Vaiṣṇava* devotees, monks, and *brāhmaṇas* were sumptuously fed. *Prasād* also was distributed to the poor. From 5-00 p.m. a public meeting was held at which Swami Ranganathananda spoke on the ideals and activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Swami Chidatmananda in Hindi, on the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Nrisingha Ballav Goswami on the theory of image worship. Swami Vireswaranandaji presided over the meeting, and in his presidential address spoke about the great significance of having a temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Vrindaban. The meeting ended with a thanks-giving by Sri Natvarlal M. Chinai. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the accommodation of more than 500 devotees and 110 sadhus. All the items of the programme were gone through with great care and solemnity. The monks and devotees passed these days in joy and jubilation.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE VARANASI

Report for April 1971—March 1972

Founded in 1900 with the blessings of Swami Vivekananda by his disciple Swami Shubhananda, this institution now conducts the following works of service:

Indoor General Hospital with 186 beds, treated 2,822 cases in 1971, 1,329 being surgical cases. 12,879 operative procedures were done, including those from the Out-patient department. The new Operation Theatres-cum-Surgical block, begun in 1968, costing Rs. 5,34,334/- was completed, and dedicated by Swami Vireswaranandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in September.

Out-patient Department: In 1971, 52,386 new patients were treated, with 1,27,404 repeat visits. Average daily attendance was 492. Total number of surgical cases was 4,007. These data include the Shivala Branch.

Homoeopathy: The *homoeopathic* sections both at Luxa and Shivala continued to serve many patients, with five physicians.

Laboratories: Clinical and pathological studies, both routine and special, were increasingly extensive. E.g.: 3,165 routine blood-counts; 1,837 Sedimentation rates; 636 specialized blood-studies; 343 serological studies; 1,260 blood-sugars: 634 B.U.N.'s; 138 bacteriologic cultures, among others.

X-ray and Electro-Therapy: 1390 cases were examined by X-ray, including 100 Gastro-intestinal series; and 260 by fluoroscopy.

Staff: Medical staff consists of honorary and paid qualified medical officers; nursing is done by

monastic and lay members of the Mission, and some qualified paid workers.

Invalids' Homes: Two Homes, for helpless old invalid men and women respectively, maintained 24 men and 27 women. The men were mainly retired monks of the Ramakrishna Order; the women mainly poor widows, with none to care for them. As costs have risen sharply in late years, a deficit of Rs. 17,922.68 has accumulated.

Outdoor Relief: Despite paucity of funds, monthly pecuniary help was given to 54 poor invalids and helpless ladies, to total of Rs. 1,731.60; and 164 blankets, worth Rs. 1,220.22, were distributed among the needy.

Guest House: Maintained for sympathizers and well-wishers of the Institution, who should arrange in advance with the Secretary for accommodations.

Library: The small library had 2,740 books and reeived 3 dailies and 24 periodicals.

Dairy: The small dairy produces less than one-third of the Hospital's requirements.

Immediate Needs: (1) Funds for general maintenance. (2) Endowment of beds: only a few have so far been endowed, at cost of Rs. 25,000/- each. Donors may also make partial endowments of Rs. 10,000/- or 5,000/- to perpetuate the memories of their dear ones. (3) Endowments are similarly essential for the Invalids' Homes, especially in view of the large deficit mentioned. (4) To meet the accumulated deficit of Rs. 1,88,602/-. (5) Residential quarters for Staff are urgently needed, to cost of Rs. 50,000/-. (6) To even approach total coverage of hospital milk-needs, the dairy must have Rs. 50,000/- to purchase cows and build sheds.

MAHĀSAMĀDHI OF SWAMI OMKARANANDA

With deep sorrow we record the passing away of Srimat Swami Omkaranandaji, a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at Sri Ramakrishna Yogodyana, Kankurgachi, Calcutta on Tuesday the 8th May 1973, at 4.50 p.m. He was 77. The Swami had been ailing for some time past, but the end came suddenly. His body was cremated next day at the Belur Math across the Gaṅgā, in the presence of a large number of monks and devotees.

The Swami, known as Ananga Mohan Neogi in early life, was born and brought up in Calcutta. As a student, he was fortunate to come in close contact with many of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, including Sri Mahendranath Gupta, the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. After obtaining his M.A. degree at the Calcutta University, he went to Jayrambati and met Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, to whom he expressed his desire to become a monk. On this occasion he became her initiated disciple. Encouraged by her, he joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1919 at Bhubaneshwar and was ordained sannyāsin in the year 1923 by Srimat Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and then President of the Order.

The Swami was manager of the Belur Math for some time and was elected a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1929. From 1944 to 1951, he was in-charge of Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama at Varanasi. In 1951, he became head of Sri Ramakrishna Yogodyana at Kankurgachi, Calcutta, which post he held till the end. He was elected a Vice-President of the Organization in 1966.

Swami Omkaranandaji was an erudite scholar and a forceful speaker, besides being an expert in ceremonial worship of various kinds. His somewhat rough exterior hid within it a tender heart which endeared him to all those who came in close contact with him. In administrative matters of the Organization his sagacious counsel and able guidance were greatly valued. In him the devotees have lost a spiritual guide endowed with understanding, affection and sympathy.

His sad demise is an irreparable loss to the Order. May his soul rest in peace!


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